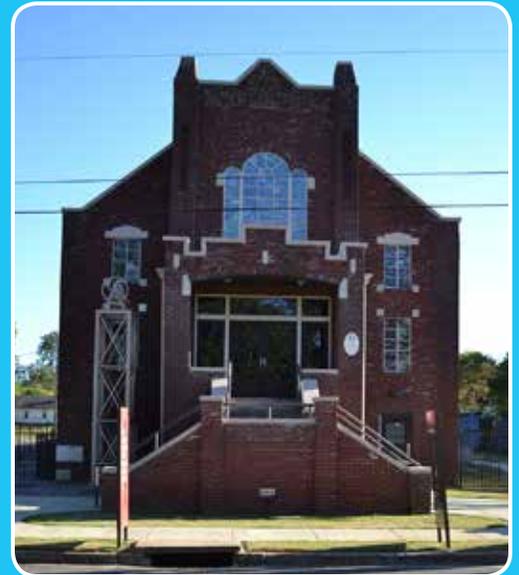


# NORTH BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK PLAN FINAL DOCUMENT



PREPARED BY THE REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM  
AND THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
FEBRUARY 2015

# North Birmingham Community Framework Plan: Final Document



This project was supported by funding from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB), the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Building Communities Program, and the City of Birmingham. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Birmingham MPO or the RPCGB.

This plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), MPO and RPCGB as a requirement of Title 23 USC 134 and subsequent modification under Public Law 109-59 (SAFETEA-LU) August 2005. The contents of the plan do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

# **DRAFT**

## **Acknowledgments**

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# Introduction

CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 About the Framework Plan

The North Birmingham Community Framework Plan is a subset of the City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2013. This community framework plan includes the neighborhoods of Acipco-Finley, Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park, Hooper City, and North Birmingham.

For the purposes of completing this plan, the City of Birmingham contracted with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) Building Communities Program, which uses a combination of funding from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and a local match from the City.

The objective of this planning effort was the development of a framework plan for the North Birmingham Community that fits seamlessly with other current and future planning efforts. In this regard, RPCGB worked closely with City staff, community leaders, and regional stakeholders to ensure a meaningful and deliberate planning process. In accordance with this goal, RPCGB and the City led a series of public community meetings throughout the North Birmingham Community to ensure community input and guidance for the final plan.

This framework plan uses research produced in the Existing Conditions Document and the North Birmingham Community Health Impact Assessment to recommend projects and to outline implementation strategies. These projects intend to improve the quality of life for those in the North Birmingham Community and to attract and retain residents and businesses in the future.

## 1.2 Geographic and Historic Context

### Location

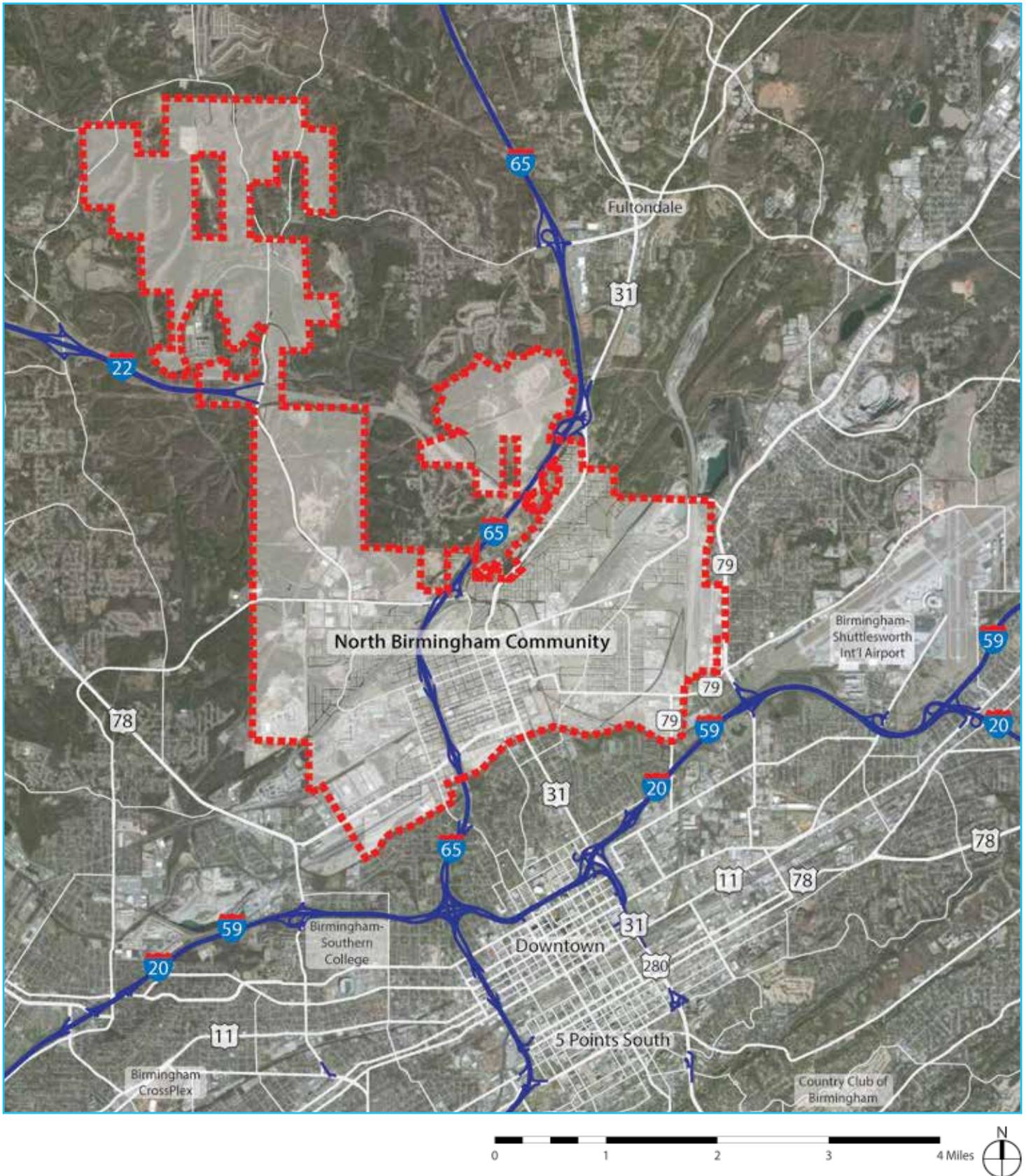
The North Birmingham Community is located north of Birmingham's downtown, south of the cities of Fultondale and Gardendale, and bisected by two major highways (Interstate 65 and U.S. Highway 31). The community is bordered by Village Creek to the south and generally bounded by Walker Chapel Road to the north and both State Route 79 and the CSX railroad to the east. On the following pages, Map 1.2.1 shows the location of the community within a regional context and Map 1.2.2 shows the locations of its six neighborhoods.

### History

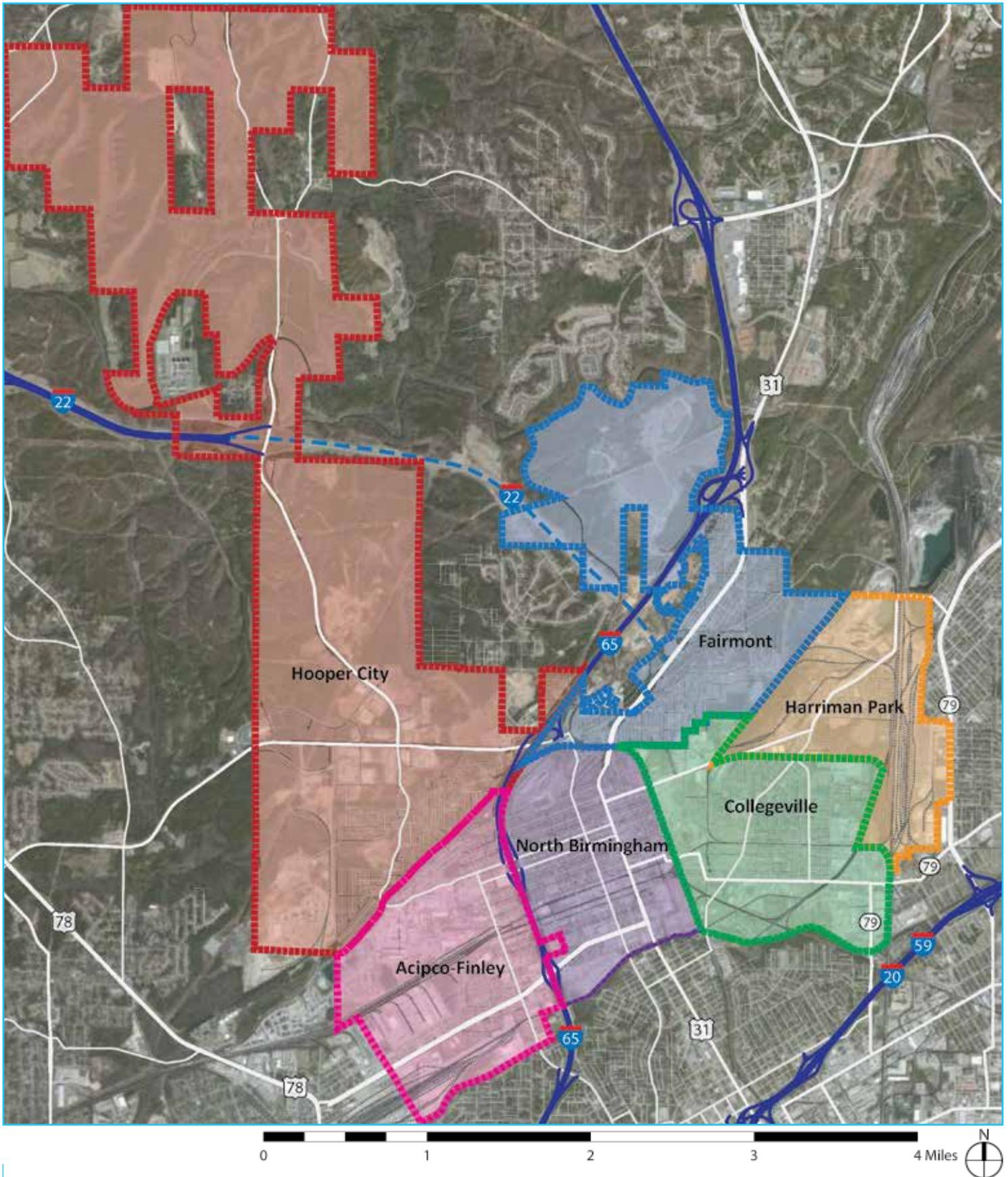
The majority of the neighborhoods within the North Birmingham Community originated as company-built camps for industrial workers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These small communities were clustered adjacent to their respective industries and provided housing, educational opportunities, and services to workers in the factories.

Today, the North Birmingham Community is experiencing dynamic changes and uncertainties. The combination of the proximity of residential areas to heavy industry and the lack of environmental regulation during the early 20th century has caused significant environmental pollution that has accumulated over time. With severe blight, a declining population, and a lagging workforce, substantial investments and partnerships are necessary to revitalize the community. The community's strategic location, access to major transportation networks, available land, and rich history should prove invaluable as the community moves forward.

Map 1.2.1: North Birmingham Community Regional Context



Map 1.2.2: North Birmingham Community Neighborhood Context



## 1.3 Plan Development & Public Participation Process

The planning process is the mechanism by which community members, stakeholders, and government agencies work together to develop a vision, articulate goals, and craft implementation strategies. Driven by quantitative and qualitative analyses, the planning process coalesces in-depth analyses of a community's existing socioeconomic, demographic, transportation, and infrastructure data with the community's values and aspirations. The North Birmingham Community Framework planning process began in December 2013 and concluded with its adoption by the Birmingham Planning Commission in February 2015. Conducted in three phases, the planning process was executed with the full involvement of community members, stakeholders, and government agencies.

### Phase I: Community Assessment

The community assessment began with the collection and analysis of socioeconomic, demographic, transportation, and infrastructure data. Additionally, a parcel-by-parcel inventory was conducted throughout the entire community to determine the present use of each property, identify discrepancies with the City's land use map, discern land use densities, and provide a detailed analysis of the community's property conditions. The data collected from the property conditions inventory is intended to assist the City of Birmingham's Department of Community Development and the Mayor's Office of Economic Development in identifying and prioritizing properties, resources, and funding for rehabilitation, renovation, development, and investment.

Furthermore, the property conditions inventory will aid the Department of Community Development's RISE Initiative in assigning blighted properties to be condemned and addressed for code enforcement. Lastly, the property conditions inventory assists the Birmingham Land Bank in prioritizing tax delinquent properties for assembly and acquisition. The completion of the community assessment resulted in the Existing Conditions Document. The Existing Conditions Document highlights the community's opportunities, challenges, and was used to inform this document.

### Phase II: Public Involvement



The public involvement process for the North Birmingham Community Framework Plan engaged multiple government agencies, non-profits, private organizations, and the general public through stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and online by way of the project website: <http://www.imaginebham.com>.

**Stakeholder Interviews:** The public input process commenced in December with stakeholder interviews. The interviews were conducted to assess the challenges in the community. The stakeholder interview process provided guidance on the development of appropriate strategies and corresponding actions for implementation, with respect to the issues identified by each government agency.

The following City of Birmingham departments were interviewed: Community Development; Mayor's Office of Economic Development; Birmingham Police Department; Birmingham Fire & Rescue Services; Traffic Engineering; Planning, Engineering & Permits; and Parks and Recreation.

In addition, the government agencies interviewed that are affiliated with the Birmingham region were: Jefferson County Department of Health, Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority, Housing Authority of the Birmingham District, and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT).

- 🗨️ **Kick-Off Meeting:** To introduce the community to the framework planning process for initial feedback, a kick-off meeting was held on February 24, 2014, at the North Birmingham Public Library. Community members and stakeholders were asked to describe the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the North Birmingham Community. Participants identified specific concerns that the framework plan should address and articulated their vision for the community.
- 🗨️ **Community Renewal Meeting:** On March 10, 2014, the community was invited to the Trinity CME Church to identify challenges and opportunities for the revitalization of their community. Presentations by representatives of Main Street Alabama and REV Birmingham, business owners, and private sector developers provided insight into the opportunities for revitalization. Workshops and table exercises engaged participants to identify focus areas for redevelopment and investment.
- 🗨️ **Steering Committee Meeting:** Through public engagement in public meetings, stakeholder interviews, and community outreach, a Steering Committee made up of community residents and stakeholders was established. On June 24, 2014, a meeting was held with Steering Committee members to present the findings from the Existing Conditions Document and discuss strategies and recommendations on how to address challenges.
- 🗨️ **Charrette:** A series of meetings on July 21-25 held at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham's offices facilitated residents' feedback about how their community looks and feels and what changes need to be made to improve their community's aesthetics.
- 🗨️ **Proposals and Recommendations:** The community meeting on August 26, 2014, at the North Birmingham Public Library provided a forum for the public and staff to review and make further edits to the plan's proposals and recommendations.

Community members, stakeholders, and government agencies played an essential role in validating the North Birmingham Community Framework Plan. Their continued commitment will be needed to implement the strategies and actions outlined in this plan in order to achieve the community's vision.

### Phase III: Plan Development & Adoption



The last phase of the framework plan incorporated the community's feedback into the plan and had the plan adopted by the Planning Commission. A final community meeting was held on January 29, 2015, at the North Birmingham Public Library to present the final draft of the plan. The Birmingham Planning Commission is scheduled to hear and adopt the framework plan on February 18, 2015.

**Figure 1.2.1: Final Community Meeting on January 29**



Source: Birmingham City Council

## 1.4 Vision Statement

The input from residents and research from analyses were used to develop the vision for the North Birmingham Community Framework Plan. This vision reflects the community's values and aspirations for the future:

*The North Birmingham Community is a 21st century industrial powerhouse recognized for its role in the civil rights and environmental justice movements. Its stable and historic neighborhoods strategically located near Downtown Birmingham make it a vibrant and attractive destination for visitors, residents, and businesses.*

## 1.5 Plan Recommendations and Goals

The recommendations and goals of this plan were developed during the plan's public engagement process. The three overarching recommendations -- Community Renewal, Industrial Development, and Commercial Development -- have three goals each, as seen below, with strategies and actions described later in this report.

### Community Renewal Goals

- 1) Eliminate blight and strengthen vulnerable areas to create a community that is stable and attractive for development and current residents.
- 2) Transform hazardous areas into environmentally-safe and productive uses that enhance the community's quality of life.
- 3) Establish the North Birmingham Community as a destination for mixed-income housing and high-quality neighborhood amenities.

### Industrial Development Goals

- 1) Transform the North Birmingham Community into a regional model for sustainable, 21st century industrial development.
- 2) Attract and retain 21st century industrial development.
- 3) Provide valuable and sustaining careers in 21st century manufacturing for the community's workforce.

### Commercial Development Goals

- 1) Transform the North Birmingham Business District into a mixed-use, transit hub for living, working, and shopping.
- 2) Expand neighborhood shops and amenities throughout the community.
- 3) Enhance access to high-quality, healthy food outlets in the community.

# Community Renewal

# Community Renewal

## 2.1 Community Needs and Opportunities

To sustain healthy neighborhoods and a high quality of life, communities need to be supported by mixed-income housing, neighborhood amenities, institutional facilities, and access to centers of employment, healthcare, and higher learning. The North Birmingham community faces certain challenges to reaching its potential of achieving these sustainable features.

### **Blight**

The prevalence of blight is one of the predominant issues impacting the North Birmingham community. Overgrown and vacant lots, abandoned properties, and dilapidated structures present serious issues for residents and businesses. Unsound and dilapidated structures pose health and safety hazards. Abandoned structures in poor condition attract criminal activity and create safety concerns in the immediate surroundings. Furthermore, blighted properties impose a burden on city services by requiring additional maintenance, policing, and fire protection. Consequently, diminished property values near blighted properties deprive essential tax revenues and discourage investments.

### **Lack of Institutional Facilities and Neighborhood Amenities**

While the community is generally supported by safety services and educational facilities, it lacks quality healthcare facilities, daycare centers, recreational amenities, and neighborhood shops. Although each neighborhood within the community has at least one recreation center or park, most are not large enough to offer the programs and activities desired by residents.

In addition, the community does not have any designated bicycle or pedestrian paths and trails, which would offer an alternative mode of transportation and enhance quality of life. Although the North Birmingham Business District is centrally located, the community as a whole is underserved by services such as grocery stores, restaurants, daycare centers, and pharmacies. Transit service is also inadequate in providing sufficient and effective access to neighborhood facilities and services or those in other communities.

The strategies and recommendations presented in this section will address the community's blight and lack of services. When applied to strategic sites identified in this plan, the presented solutions will enhance the community's quality of life and foster a healthier economy. For more detailed information on the community's assets and challenges, refer to the Existing Conditions Document.

**Table 2.1 Community Needs and Opportunities**

NEEDS
Maintenance, safety, code enforcement, and monitoring of blighted properties
Larger parks, recreation facilities, and/or more recreation programs tailored to residents
Variety and greater number of neighborhood shops and services
Healthcare facilities and businesses serving healthy foods
OPPORTUNITIES
Revitalization of the North Birmingham Business District
Conversion of blighted properties into productive uses
Capitalizing off of the community's strategic location and historical assets
Working with the Birmingham Land Bank Authority and the RISE initiative

## 2.2 Community Renewal (CR) Strategies and Actions

Two Community Renewal strategies are recommended for the North Birmingham Community to address blight, environmental issues, and neighborhood assets:

- 1) **Maintain & Stabilize**
- 2) **Revitalize & Develop**

These strategies are applied based on areas of opportunity and vulnerability. Opportunity is the presence of attractive, stable, and accessible places to live, work, and invest. Vulnerability is the presence of blight, population loss, abandonment, or lack of investment. Maps 2.2.1-2.2.2 show the application of each strategy. Section 2.2.1 on the following page explains the analysis and methodology used to determine levels of opportunity and vulnerability.

The **Maintain & Stabilize Strategy** focuses on areas that have high vulnerability and/or low opportunity. This strategy identifies blighted and hazardous areas for the conversion into productive uses through small-scale initiatives. This strategy will reduce the supply of deteriorated and dilapidated structures, vacant and overgrown lots, and abandoned properties. Consequently, the value of surrounding properties in well-maintained conditions will stabilize and eventually increase in value.

The **Revitalize & Develop Strategy** focuses on high-opportunity, low-vulnerability areas. This strategy seeks to establish public-private partnerships, allocate resources for revitalization, and prioritize targeted development. The objective of the Revitalize & Develop Strategy is to focus on areas whose high potential is held back by blighted surroundings and where the return on investment is highest and most assured.

The goals below relate to the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan and will be achieved by implementing each strategy. To support and carry out these strategies, a series of action items are presented on the following pages. The implementation table in Chapter 6 identifies potential partnerships that could help carry out these action items.

### COMMUNITY RENEWAL (CR) GOALS

- 1) **ELIMINATE BLIGHT AND STRENGTHEN VULNERABLE AREAS TO CREATE A COMMUNITY THAT IS STABLE AND ATTRACTIVE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT RESIDENTS.**
- 2) **TRANSFORM HAZARDOUS AREAS INTO ENVIRONMENTALLY-SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE USES THAT ENHANCE THE COMMUNITY'S QUALITY OF LIFE.**
- 3) **ESTABLISH THE NORTH BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY AS A DESTINATION FOR MIXED-INCOME HOUSING AND HIGH-QUALITY NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES.**

## 2.2.1 Vulnerability & Opportunity Analysis and Methodology

A GIS analysis assigns strategies to individual parcels in the North Birmingham Community, as illustrated in Table 2.2.1 below. The detailed methodology for this analysis is shown in Table 2.2.2. The intention of this analysis is to provide residents, businesses, non-profits, government agencies, and developers a guide to the best locations to dedicate resources. For instance, businesses may be most interested in investing in high-opportunity and low-vulnerability areas while nonprofits may be most interested in all high-vulnerability areas.

The criteria used for this analysis is based on property conditions, appraised values per square foot, tax-delinquency, and proximity to amenities. Parcels with the highest opportunity have structurally sound and well-maintained conditions, the highest appraised values per square foot, a distance of a ¼ of a mile or less from institutional facilities and neighborhood amenities, and are not tax-delinquent. Parcels with the highest vulnerability have dilapidated or unmaintained conditions, the lowest appraised values per square foot, five or more years of tax delinquency, and a distance of two miles or more from institutional facilities and neighborhood amenities.

**Table 2.2.1 Vulnerability & Opportunity Strategies**

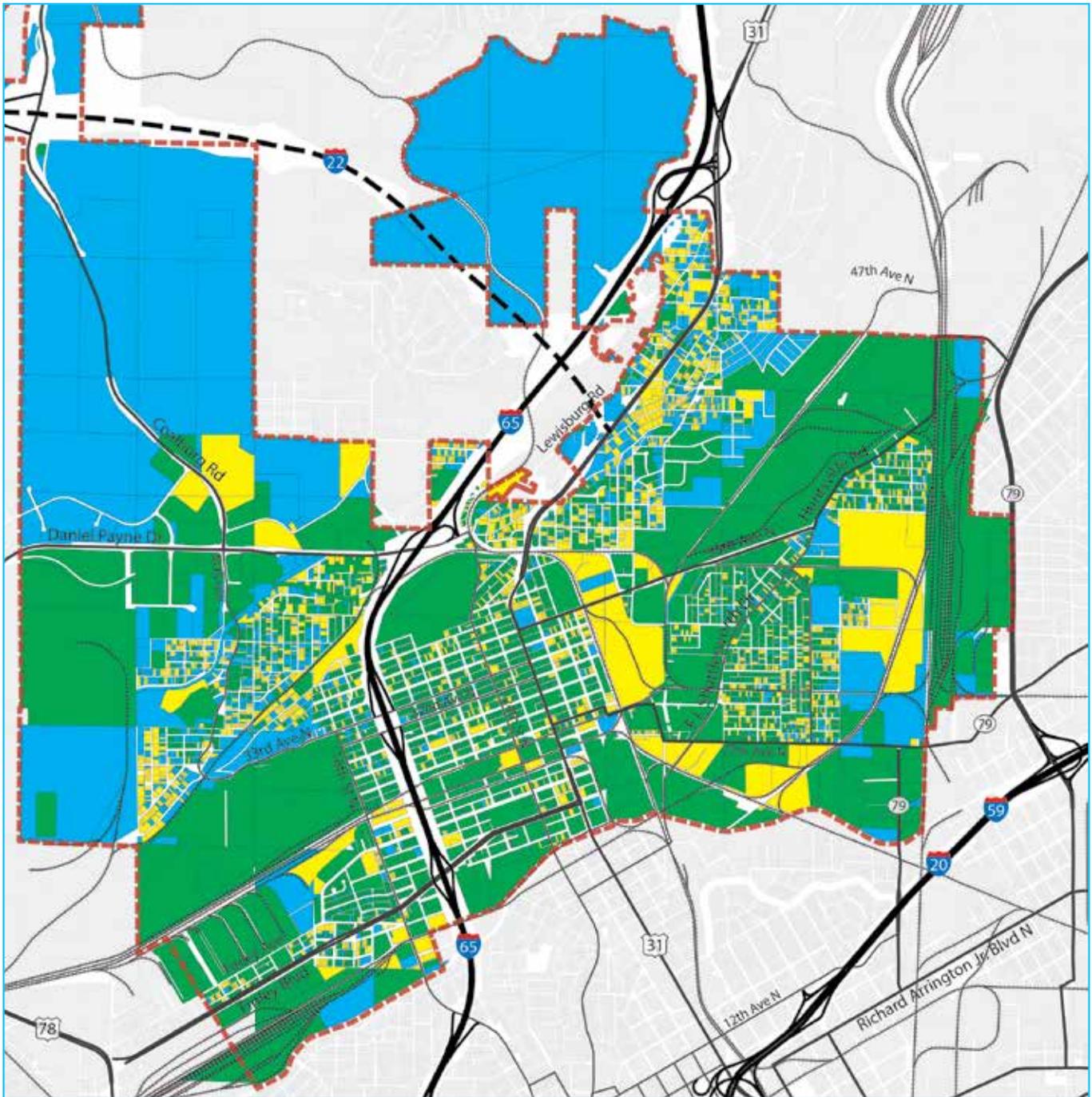
		OPPORTUNITY	
		LOW	HIGH
VULNERABILITY	LOW	<u>Maintain &amp; Stabilize</u>	<u>Revitalize &amp; Develop</u>
	HIGH	<u>Maintain &amp; Stabilize</u>	

**Table 2.2.2 Vulnerability & Opportunity Methodology**

FACTORS	VALUE		WEIGHT	
	OPPORTUNITY	VULNERABILITY	OPPORTUNITY	VULNERABILITY
<b>Property Conditions</b>				
Sound Occupied	10	0	35%	40%
Sound Unoccupied	9	1	35%	40%
Deteriorated Occupied	4	6	35%	40%
Deteriorated Unoccupied	3	7	35%	40%
Dilapidated Occupied	1	9	35%	40%
Dilapidated Unoccupied	0	10	35%	40%
Vacant Maintained	10	0	35%	40%
Vacant Overgrown	1	9	35%	40%
Vacant Natural	8	2	35%	40%
<b>Appraised Values, per sq. ft.</b>				
\$0 TO \$1.67	1	9	25%	15%
\$1.67 TO \$5.61	3	7	25%	15%
\$5.62 TO \$9.55	7	3	25%	15%
\$9.56 TO \$13.50	8	2	25%	15%
\$13.61 TO \$60.60	9	1	25%	15%
<b>Tax Delinquency (in years)</b>				
Not tax-delinquent	10	0	10%	35%
1 year	3	7	10%	35%
2-4 years	2	8	10%	35%
>5 years	1	9	10%	35%
<b>Proximity to:</b>				
<u>Schools and Libraries</u>				
Within 1/4 mile	10	0	14%	4%
1/4 - 1/2 mile	7	3	14%	4%
1/2 - 1 mile	1	9	14%	4%
>1 mile	0	10	14%	4%
<u>Grocery/Farmer's Market</u>				
Within 1/4 mile	10	1	10%	3%
Within 1/4 mile	7	3	10%	3%
1/2 - 1 mile	1	9	10%	3%
>1 mile	0	10	10%	3%
<u>Parks/Recreation Centers</u>				
Within 1/4 mile	10	0	6%	3%
1/4 - 1/2 mile	7	3	6%	3%
1/2 - 2 miles	1	9	6%	3%
>2 miles	0	10	6%	3%

*Opportunity and Vulnerability scores for each parcel equal the sum of given values from each factor multiplied by its respective weight. Scores range from 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.*

Map 2.2.1: Community Renewal Strategies by Parcel



**Community Renewal Strategies by Parcel**

**Revitalize & Develop Strategy**

- High Opportunity & Low Vulnerability

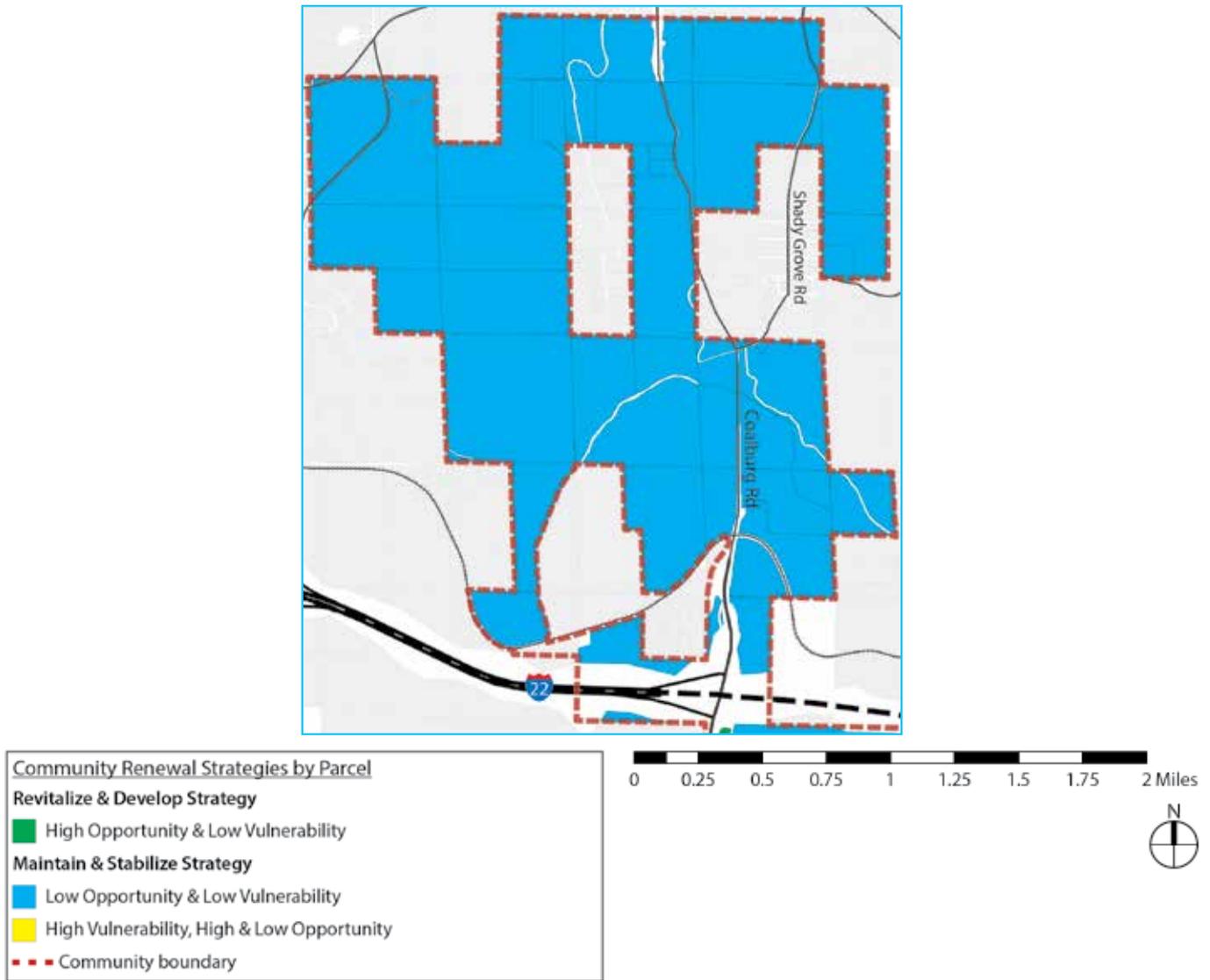
**Maintain & Stabilize Strategy**

- Low Opportunity & Low Vulnerability
- High Vulnerability, High & Low Opportunity

--- Community boundary



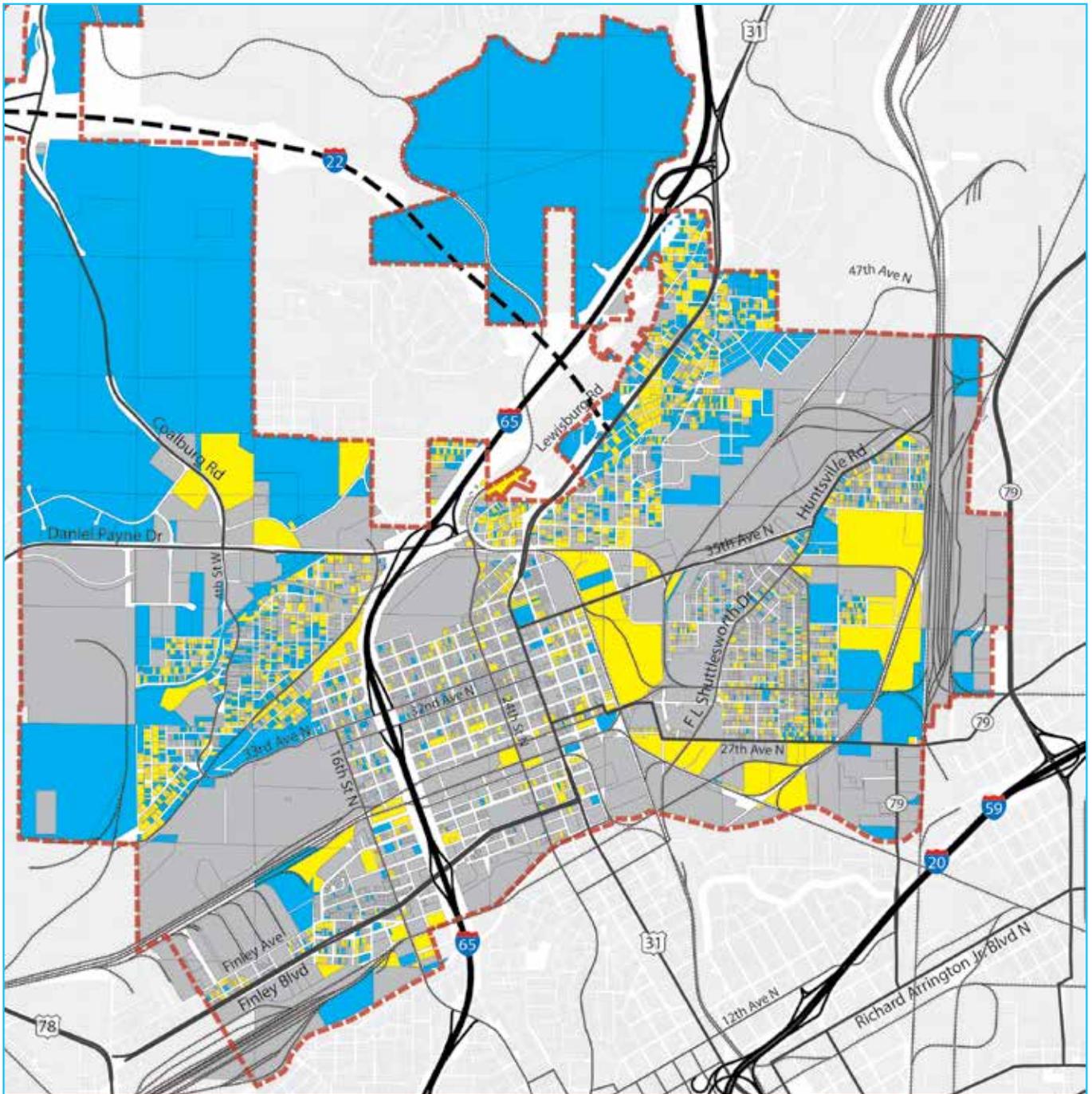
Map 2.2.2: Community Renewal Strategies by Parcel (North Hooper City)



Map 2.2.1 and Map 2.2.2 show where the two strategies should be applied in the North Birmingham Community. The blue parcels (Maintain & Stabilize) are concentrated in Hooper City and Fairmont and scattered throughout the other neighborhoods. The most vulnerable areas in need of stabilization, shown in yellow, are scattered throughout Fairmont, the southern part of Hooper City, and a portion of Collegeville. As areas throughout the community are maintained and stabilized to adequate standards, more parcels will become attractive for revitalization and development. The locations with the highest opportunity for larger-scale projects and development, identified in green, are concentrated mainly in the North Birmingham neighborhood, in Collegeville, and in Acipco-Finley. This plan’s site-specific recommendations follows this analysis.

MAINTAIN & STABILIZE STRATEGY (CR1)

Map 2.2.3: Maintain & Stabilize Strategy by Parcel



Community Renewal Strategy by Parcel

**Maintain & Stabilize Strategy**

- Low Opportunity & Low Vulnerability
- High Vulnerability, High & Low Opportunity

--- Community boundary



**ACTION CR1-A: DEVELOP A PUBLIC DATABASE OF PROPERTIES IN VIOLATION OF BUILDING CODES, IN CONDEMNATION, AND IN TAX-DELINQUENCY.**

A comprehensive database of blighted, tax-delinquent, and condemned properties that is constantly updated and available to the public will have numerous benefits to residents, community organizations, investors, and stakeholders in the North Birmingham Community:

- Residents and community organizations will learn about the progress of code enforcement and redevelopment opportunities.
- Housing, community, and economic development organizations will have access to possible locations for housing, social assistance, and workforce development services in the community.
- Urban planners and economic developers will use this information to find sites that can be assembled for redevelopment to meet community needs.
- City officials and government agencies will leverage this information to develop initiatives and partnerships to strengthen and better serve the community.

Figure 2.2.1: Online Property Inventory



Source: Motor City Mapping, Detroit, MI, 2014

### **ACTION CR1-B: MODERNIZE THE ENFORCEMENT OF BUILDING CODES, PERMITTING, AND THE CONDEMNATION PROCESS TO REDUCE BLIGHT AND STABILIZE PROPERTY VALUES.**

Blighted properties pose health and safety hazards, attract criminal activity, create an unsafe environment, impose a burden on city services, and diminish tax revenues. Thus, it is essential to enforce building codes and the condemnation process to stabilize property values, prevent blight, and create a safe and attractive environment. By modernizing, the City would streamline its enforcement and permitting process and build a more informed and supportive base of residents. The city's permitting software has already been approved for an upgrade, which will help achieve this action.

Educate property owners about the violations and options to resolve citations by:

- Creating a dedicated website with information on typical code violations and a brief description of building codes, permitting, and the condemnation process.

Streamline the inspection and legal process of condemnation by:

- Increasing staff dedicated to code enforcement and encouraging neighborhood residents to report and cite violations.
- Developing an app or website for residents to report, check, and learn about the status of code enforcement cases.

**Figure 2.2.2: Code Enforcement Guide and Policing**



Sources: *Citizen's Code Enforcement Guide in Manatee County, FL, 2014 (left); Kenner Code Violations, 2012 (right)*

**ACTION CR1-C: PROVIDE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES TO TARGET BLIGHTED PROPERTIES FOR REPAIR, RENOVATION, CONVERSION, AND ACQUISITION.**

Reversing the effects of blight throughout a community requires different approaches depending on the condition of blighted properties. A vacant lot that is abandoned or overgrown needs a new use that is productive in meeting the needs of the neighborhood and the community at large. For properties with a deteriorated or dilapidated structure, blight can be eliminated through renovation or even demolition. Lastly, properties that are tax-delinquent or abandoned without a clear title require legal and financial measures to set them on the right track towards generating tax revenues and stabilizing property values.

### 1. Renovate and Repair Deteriorated and Dilapidated Structures (Figure 2.2.3)

Use grants, competitive loans, and home improvement programs:

- *Critical Repair Grant Program, City of Birmingham:*  
Provides residents who make 30% or less of area-median income (AMI) up to \$7,500 for structural and plumbing repairs and modernization of electrical and mechanical equipment. Structural work is typically limited to correcting issues related to other repairs. Following the application's acceptance, housing inspectors visit the home and review the requested work to determine the highest needs to be addressed.
- *Commercial Revitalization Program, City of Birmingham:*  
Offers facade and storefront improvement rebates of up to 20% of costs and capital improvement rebates of up to 10% of costs, following design guidelines established by the area's merchant's association.
- *Volunteer Rehabilitation Program, City of Birmingham:*  
Provides funding to volunteer programs to assist residents making 80% or less of AMI for exterior paint, roof repairs, deck repair, and handicap ramp construction.

### 2. Convert or Reuse Abandoned and Overgrown Vacant Lots

Recreational Uses (Figure 2.2.4)

- Playgrounds and fields.

Healthy and Nutritional Uses (Figure 2.2.5)

- Mobile health clinics, mobile grocery stores, food trucks, farmer's market, community gardens, and urban agriculture.

Stormwater Management (Figure 2.2.6)

- Retention/detention ponds, bioretention cells, rain gardens, bioswales, infiltration trenches, and other stormwater management tools.

Environmental Remediation (Figure 2.2.7)

- Phytoremediation and bioremediation to filter and break down pollutants

### 3. Acquire then Transfer Tax-Delinquent Properties to Residents

The Birmingham Land Bank Authority can acquire properties that are five or more years tax-delinquent and can produce a clean title. A map of the community's tax-delinquent properties is in the Existing Conditions document. The land bank can also dispose of properties through its Side Lot Program to adjacent property owners at a minimal cost.

The city's Department of Community Development plans to implement its RISE initiative in North Birmingham following the adoption of the framework plan. RISE uses demolition, acquisition, and property transfers, to stabilize neighborhoods and will use these tools in accordance with this framework plan.

**Figure 2.2.3: Volunteers Paint a House Facade**



*Source: Habitat for Humanity Riverside, 2014*

**Figure 2.2.4: Vacant Lot Converted to a Playground**



*Source: Bring Life to Vacant Spaces, 2014*

Figure 2.2.5: Vacant Lot turned into Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture



Sources: *Power in Dirt: Turning Vacant Lots into Beautiful Green Spaces*, 2011 (top);  
*In Focus: Community Gardens*, 2012 (above)

**Figure 2.2.6: Vacant Lot to Rain Gardens and Bioswales**



Sources: *Rain Gardens*, 2014 (left); *Eco Brooklyn Inc.*, 2012 (right)

**Figure 2.2.7: Phytoremediation on a Former Vacant Lot**



Source: *Landezine*, 2014

**ACTION CR1-D: DESIGNATE, REMEDIATE, ACQUIRE AND/OR CONVERT PROPERTIES IN ENVIRONMENTALLY-CONTAMINATED AND FLOOD-PRONE AREAS INTO PRODUCTIVE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-SAFE USES.**

Portions of the Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park, and North Birmingham neighborhoods were declared a superfund site in 2012 (as shown in Map 2.2.4 on the following page) and are undergoing environmental remediation efforts. Councilor William Parker's office has been working with the EPA and other federal agencies to address this site and other environmental issues in the area.

Additionally, since the community is still an industrial center, there is also a significant number of abandoned, industrial properties that are likely brownfields with some level of environmental contamination. Additionally, parts of Collegeville, North Birmingham, and Acipco-Finley are prone to substantial flooding along Village Creek that passes by on their southern borders. These flood-prone and contaminated sites need to be identified and planned for in order to prevent them from becoming blighted properties.

**Inventory, characterize, assess, remediate, and redevelop brownfields**

- The EPA Brownfields Program provides grants and revolving loans towards technical assistance, assessment, planning, remediation, and environmental job training.
- ADEM provides a 10-step guide to redevelop brownfields (Figure 3.2.3 on p. 35) and a Brownfields Cleanup State Revolving Loan program.

**Acquire properties located in high flood-prone areas**

- Continue city efforts with FEMA to acquire properties east of Maclin Park in Collegeville.
- Identify additional flood-prone areas to expand FEMA's Flood Buyout Program.

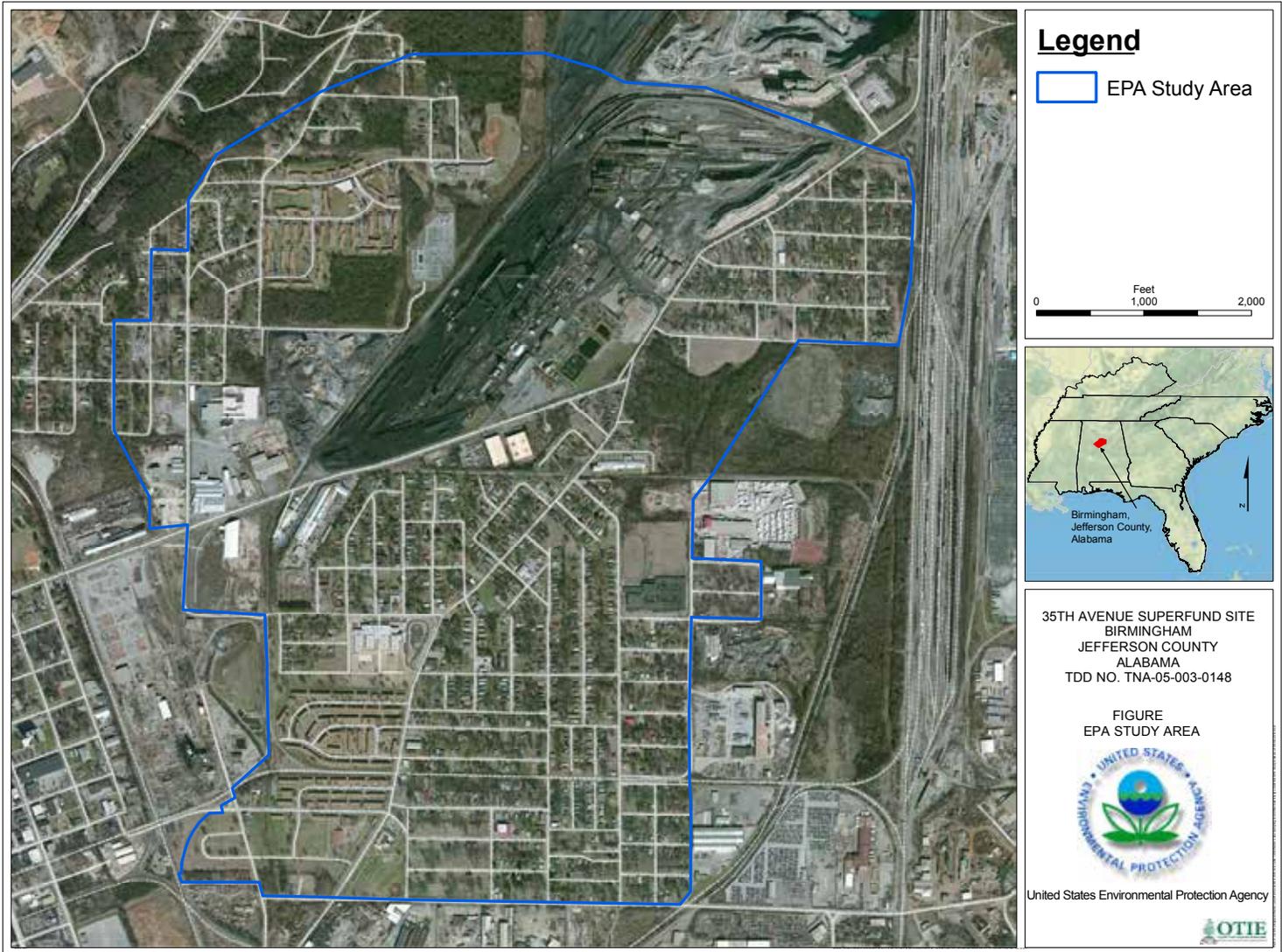
**Rezone acquired flood-prone properties for productive, open-space uses**

- Categorize these areas as open space in this plan's future land use map (Chapter 5) to ensure that future zoning in this area only allows uses that are flood resilient.

**Develop programs to mitigate flooding and improve air and water quality**

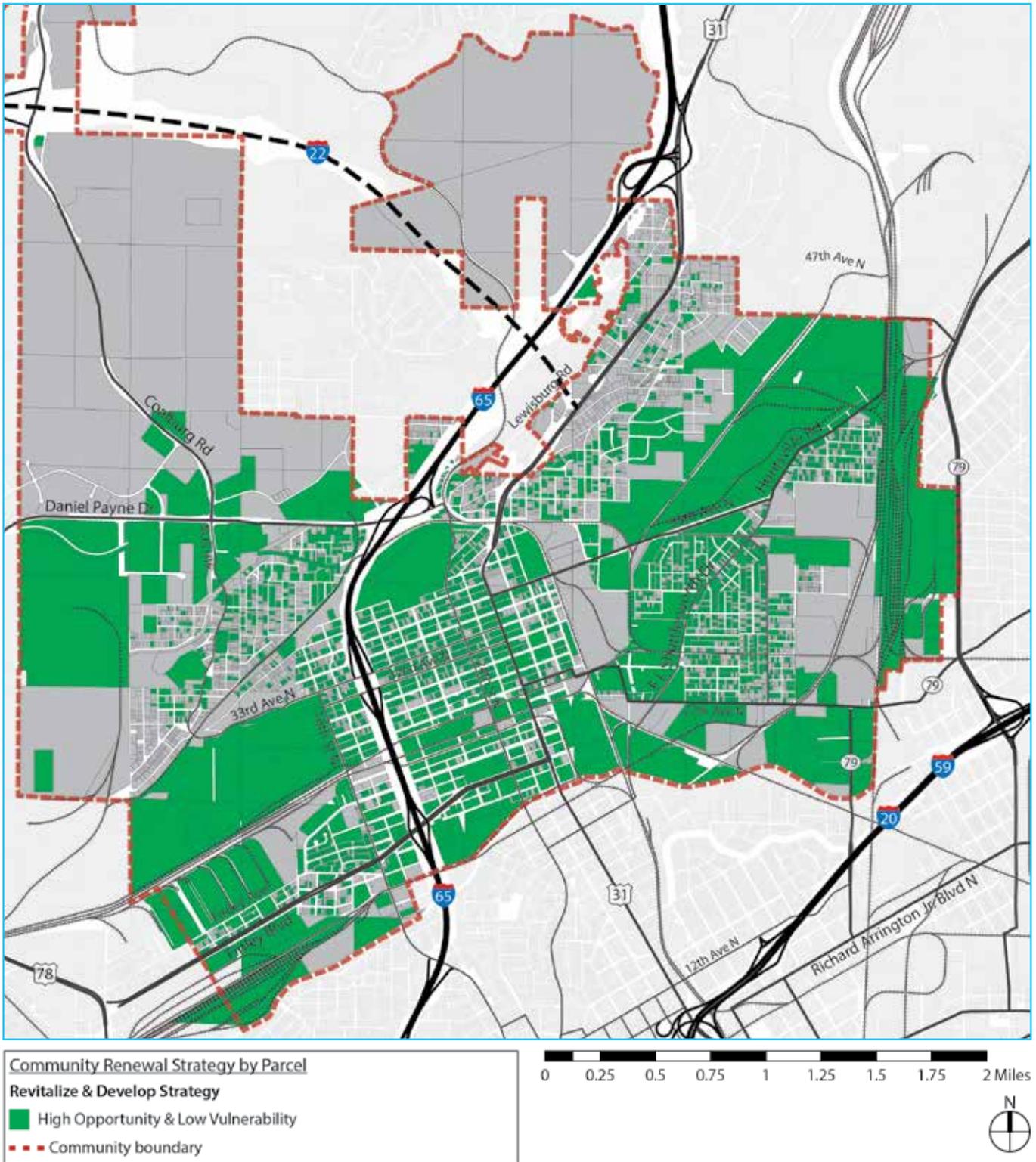
- Implement the City of Birmingham's ongoing Village Creek Watershed Management Plan.
- Create and enforce Low-Impact Development guidelines for stormwater management.

**Map 2.2.4: The 35th Avenue Superfund Site in Collegeville, Harriman Park, and Fairmont**



REVITALIZE & DEVELOP STRATEGY (CR2)

Map 2.2.5: Revitalize & Develop Strategy by Parcel



**ACTION CR2-A: PROMOTE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF PUBLICLY OWNED, VACANT FACILITIES AND HIGH-OPPORTUNITY PROPERTIES TO SERVE AS CATALYTIC PROJECTS FOR THE COMMUNITY.**

The North Birmingham Community has a substantial number of vacant sites in areas of high opportunity. Currently unoccupied, these sites present an opportunity to meet the community's needs through adaptive reuse. All of these six sites have access to major thoroughfares and central locations in the community's neighborhoods. Map. 2.2.5 on p. 27 locates each site. Some of the potential uses for the selected sites are repeated due to the use's general need and the flexibility of some sites.

**1. North Birmingham Elementary School (closed):** the structure and property is owned and maintained by the Birmingham Board of Education but unoccupied. The future land use map includes this property within the mixed-use medium area, which provides additional redevelopment flexibility. The 40,000 square-foot property can be adapted for multiple uses:

- Higher education facility or training center for GED certification, professional certifications programs, and other similar programs.
- Commercial or industrial incubator for 21st century industrial manufacturing businesses or restaurants.
- Mixed-use development with assisted living for senior citizens, affordable and mixed-income residential units, live-work units, and retail or office space for small businesses.
- Community facility for services such as daycare, senior care, exercise programs, after school programs, cooking demonstrations, and office space for non-profit organizations.

**2. Former Carver High School (closed with temporary use):** the property is owned by the Birmingham Board of Education and is currently being used by EPA for environmental remediation operations. The building footprint is about 130,000 square feet. The property, designed as mixed-use medium in the future land use map, could be adapted into multiple uses:

- Higher education facility or training center for GED certification, professional certifications programs, and other similar programs.
- Commercial incubator for bakeries, restaurants, and other neighborhood-oriented businesses.
- Residential development with mixed-income units.
- Community facility for services such as daycare, senior care, exercise programs, after school programs, cooking demonstrations, and office space for non-profit organizations.

**3. Riggins Elementary School (closed):** the structure and property is owned, maintained, but unoccupied by the Birmingham Board of Education. Due to its location adjacent to a coke plant and findings by the EPA of potential for levels of concern for long-term pollutants, the facility should not be redeveloped for inhabitable uses. However, with its building footprint of about 40,000 square feet on a 9-acre site, the property could be used for:

- Research center and testing grounds for environmental remediation techniques, such as phytoremediation, bioremediation, and in situ chemical reduction.

**4. Northern Health Center (closed):** the structure and property is owned by the Jefferson County Board of Health -- maintained and unoccupied. The property has a 14,000 square foot building footprint. It could be reused in several ways to fit in its mixed-use designation in the future land use map:

- Higher education facility or training center for GED certification, professional certifications programs, and other similar programs.
- Mixed-use development with affordable live-work units, office space for non-profit and faith-based organizations, and small businesses.
- Mobile health clinics, health screenings, and healthy produce and cooking demonstrations until the community has the residential concentration to support a community health clinic.

**5. Former U.S. Pipe & Foundry site (vacant):** The 60 acre-site is designated as light industrial in the future land use map because of its industrial past. It would need to be assessed for environmental contamination first, but could be ideal for:

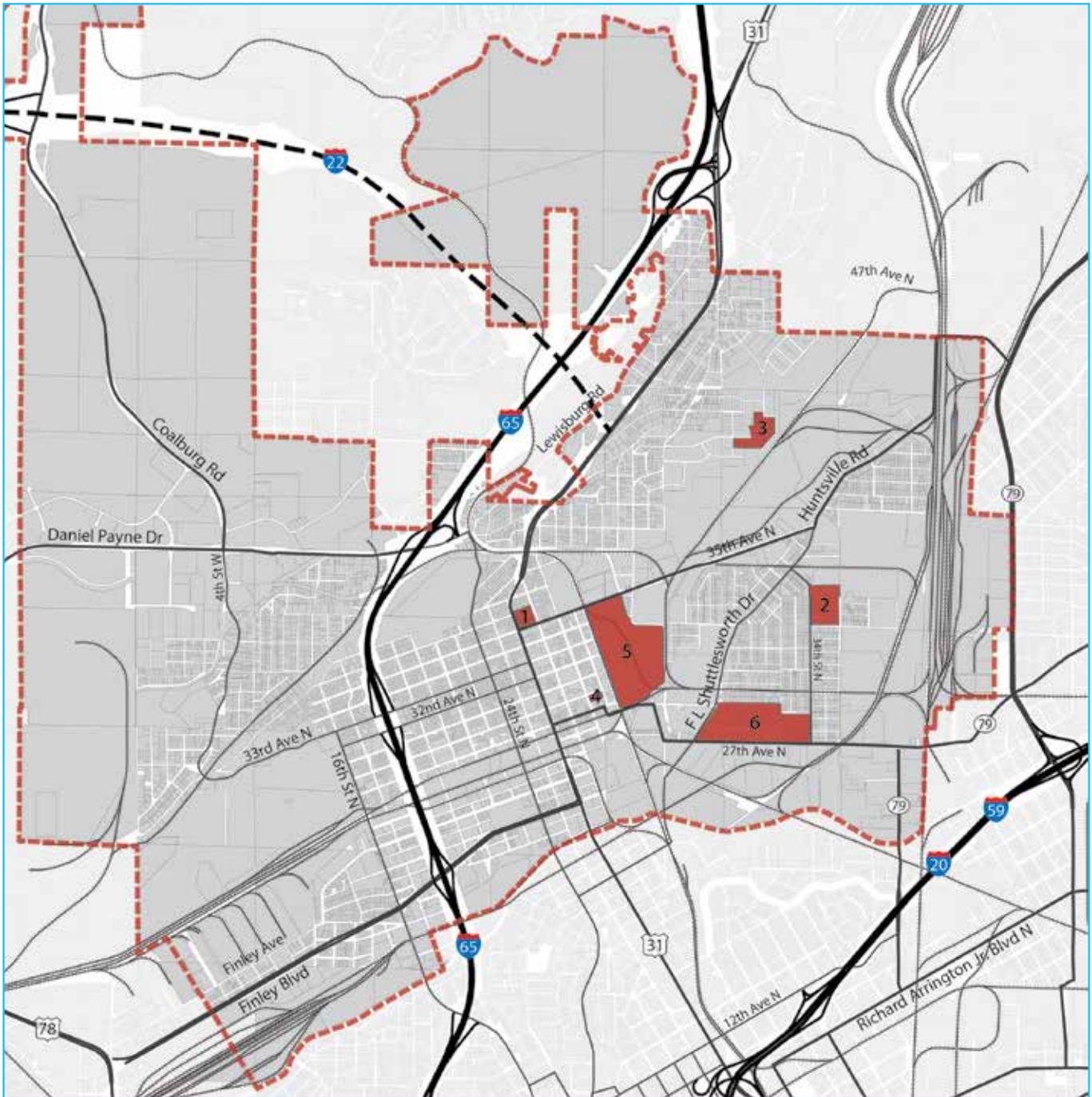
- Industrial district for 21st century industrial manufacturing businesses that could include an industrial incubator and a center for research, education, and training in industrial sectors.
- Region or community-wide large-scale stormwater management improvements, such as retention or detention ponds, bioretention cells, rain gardens, bioswales, and infiltration trenches.
- Research center and testing grounds for environmental remediation techniques, such as phytoremediation, bioremediation, and in situ chemical reduction.

**6. Lots east of Maclin Park (vacant):** Due to its location in a floodplain, the lots in this area should be only redeveloped into inhabitable uses compatible with the open space designation in the future land use map.

Potential uses should build off the ongoing improvements being made to Maclin Park. Examples include:

- Region or community-wide large-scale stormwater management improvements, such as retention or detention ponds, bioretention cells, rain gardens, bioswales, and infiltration trenches.
- Regional community and recreational facility.
- Large open areas for mobile grocery stores, food trucks, farmer's market, community gardens, commercial urban agriculture, and festivals.

Map 2.2.6: Sites for Adaptive Reuse and Redevelopment



Sites for Adaptive Reuse and Redevelopment

- Sites for Adaptive Reuse and Redevelopment
- 1. North Birmingham Elementary School (closed)
- 2. Former Carver High School (closed)
- 3. Riggins Elementary School (closed)
- 4. Northern Health Center (closed)
- 5. Former U.S. Pipe & Foundry site (vacant)
- 6. Lots East of Maclin Park
- Community boundary

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 1.75 2 Miles



**ACTION CR2-B: ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS AND ALIGN RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN THE NORTH BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY.**

Revitalizing and stabilizing the North Birmingham Community will require public-private collaboration. Stable and attractive neighborhoods, successful business districts and commercial areas, and productive industrial centers rely on public and private economic and community developers that can provide expertise, assistance, and guidance. The implementation table in Chapter 6 pairs potential partners with specific action items. Below are just a few organizations and resources that the North Birmingham Community could partner with:

- **City of Birmingham:** The Department of Community Development, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, and the Planning, Engineering & Permits Department should coordinate and prioritize the allocation of their grants, loans, and resources.
- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** The federal agency is working with the city's elected officials towards the remediation of contaminated properties and to leverage resources across state and federal agencies to collaborate on addressing stormwater management, improvements to health, and community and economic development.
- **Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (NBCC):** This organization of neighborhood leaders is working towards commercial revitalization, access to healthcare, and housing redevelopment in the context of environmental justice for the community.
- **Birmingham Land Bank Authority:** The BLBA can acquire and redistribute properties that have been tax delinquent for five or more years. These properties can be transferred for a minimal cost to adjacent property owners, nonprofits, and developers. The land bank can use this plan as a guide for which delinquent properties to acquire and how best to redistribute them.
- **Faith-based, non-profit, and community development organizations and local businesses:** This group of local stakeholders can develop new housing, provide community services, and coordinate the maintenance of neighborhood blocks by allocating materials, tools, and volunteers.
- **Jefferson County Health Action Partnership:** This coalition of more than 80 organizations and agencies works together to improve the county's health measurements. The partnership will be of particular help when implementing action items related to health.
- **Housing Authority of the Birmingham District:** The authority manages public housing in the Collegeville and Fairmont neighborhood, coordinates the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program, and the Lease-Purchase Homeownership Program.
- **Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA):** The transit authority operates and directs the city's public transportation. BJCTA can help the North Birmingham Community by improving transit routes and bus stations for better connectivity.

# Economic & Workforce Development

## Economic & Workforce Development

### 3.1 Economic & Workforce Development Needs and Opportunities

Economic and workforce development are critical, mutually inclusive components that are main drivers of a city's growth. Without an educated and skilled workforce, companies cannot grow and cities cannot retain and attract companies. On the other hand, without a diverse and stable foundation of industries and supporting businesses, employees are not able to develop, retain, and expand their skills and careers in order to contribute to a city's economy. Consequently, a lack of or imbalance with these two components leads to economic decline, high unemployment, poverty, and low quality of life. The strategies and recommendations presented in this section will address these challenges and opportunities.

#### Skills, Education, and Income Gap

The North Birmingham community faces many challenges to building and sustaining a strong economy. With an increasingly older population, an unemployment rate of 23.2% as of 2010, and an educational attainment of only 6.7% for bachelor's degrees and higher, there is a severe mismatch in the community's labor force between the types of jobs available and the skills and education required. While the largest share (41.3%) of jobs in the community are in the goods-producing industries, only 10.5% of the community's labor force works in these industries. Alternatively, while 70.9% of the community's labor force works in the services and trade sectors, only 42.2% of all jobs within the community are from these sectors. This discrepancy demonstrates the need to strengthen the relationship between local employers and the community's workforce.

With a high poverty rate between 22.7% and 36.2%, a median household income of \$18,087, and steady population declines over the past several decades, the community's residents lack the financial capacity to support businesses and services in the long-run. As a result, the community is underserved by employment opportunities needed to improve residents' income and living conditions. Although the educational attainment rates for higher education are relatively low, 75.5% of adults in the community have at least a high-school diploma. Paired with the prevalence of goods-producing industries in the community, the high rate of high school graduates provides a ready supply of labor to new businesses and well-paying, high-growth careers in advanced manufacturing.

#### Business District, Transportation Improvements, and Opportunity Sites

Despite these challenges, the North Birmingham Community has many opportunities to reverse this cycle of economic decline. Accessible via highways and bus lines, the North Birmingham Business District is a critical asset that serves the entire community. With its historic character, land ready for development, and unoccupied buildings available for adaptive reuse, the district has the potential to attract new businesses and tenants. Targeted investments in education, workforce development, and employment opportunities are needed to overcome this challenge.

Another opportunity area for economic development is located along Finley Boulevard. With its capacity for freight movement, connection to major highways, underutilized properties, and vacant parcels, the area along Finley Boulevard is prime for commercial and industrial development. In addition, the planned expansion of Finley Boulevard to Vanderbilt Road will provide a better connection to the airport and will make the area even more attractive to new and existing businesses. The extension under construction of Interstate 22 to U.S. Highway 31 and the presence of large strategically-located brownfield sites throughout the community also present opportunities for long-term economic development.

**Table 3.1 Economic & Workforce Development Needs and Opportunities**

NEEDS
Industrial and commercial development
Employment opportunities and stable careers
Higher education and professional/technical training programs
Variety and greater number of neighborhood businesses to serve community residents
OPPORTUNITIES
North Birmingham Business District’s historic character and available space for expansion
Finley Boulevard corridor’s access and availability for commercial and industrial development
Undeveloped, large parcels with access to highways
Large, brownfield sites strategically located for adaptive reuse
Supply of labor for emerging industries

### 3.2 Industrial Development (ID) Strategies and Actions

The North Birmingham Community, developed from the traditional industries of mining, iron, and steel, is still predominantly an industrial center for Birmingham. Despite the recent, ongoing challenges with environmental justice that is partly a result of decades of environmental pollution, it is essential for the economic prosperity of the community, the city, and the region as a whole, to continue providing opportunities within the community for industrial development.

The challenge for the North Birmingham Community is to change the negative perception of industry of the past as a source of pollution, nuisance, and blight into the 21st century industrial development that provides opportunities for employment and economic prosperity. Future industrial development must work closely with residents to avoid the environmental and workforce mistakes made in the past.

#### INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (ID) GOALS

- 1) TRANSFORM THE NORTH BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY INTO A REGIONAL MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE, 21ST CENTURY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.**
- 2) ATTRACT, PROTECT, AND RETAIN 21ST CENTURY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.**
- 3) PROVIDE VALUABLE AND SUSTAINING CAREERS IN 21ST CENTURY MANUFACTURING FOR THE COMMUNITY’S WORKFORCE.**

### **21st Century Industrial Development in the North Birmingham Community**

There are several potential benefits for encouraging industrial development in the North Birmingham Community. Manufacturing is still an urban process, as 80% of all U.S. goods are exported from the 100 most populous metropolitan areas in the United States. As the nation's source of research, development, and innovation, manufacturing strengthens networks of competitors, suppliers, customers, universities, and research and development cooperatives (APA, 2014). With access to highways and proximity to an international airport, major universities, and research centers, the North Birmingham Community provides a strategic location for 21st century manufacturing.

Encompassing a wide range of fields and sectors, industrial development enhances employment diversity, wages, and the quality and stability of jobs. Since the end of the recession in 2009, manufacturing has been one of the few sectors in the economy that has consistently increased in employment. Furthermore, out of all the manufacturing jobs, about 30% are in the growing fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). With an average salary of \$53,000 and about half requiring less than a bachelor's degree, STEM manufacturing jobs are not only a source of higher income but are also within reach to the community's labor force (APA, 2014). As of 2011, across the nation the educational attainment of the manufacturing's labor force with a high-school degree had the largest share – about 35%, which further emphasizes the compatibility of the community's labor force to the manufacturing industry (Manufacturing Institute, 2012). Although the manufacturing labor force typically tends to comprise an older demographic, new employment opportunities will become available for a younger generation as more veteran workers go into retirement (APA, 2014). Hence, manufacturing jobs provide an incentive for a younger generation of workers to stay in the community, build a stable and relatively well-paying career, and contribute to the local economy.

Since the late 20th century manufacturing in the United States has restructured from single entities housing material sourcing, manufacturing operations, and distribution to multiple, individual businesses outsourcing specific functions in the supply chain. In essence, manufacturing has split into three specialized sectors: production, distribution, and repair. The specialization on production allows businesses in manufacturing to evolve by relying on technology and innovation to produce new products and methods. The distribution sector – made of businesses in wholesaling, warehousing, shipping, and delivery – have space and access requirements while enterprises in the repair sector mostly value proximity to goods sold and used by retail consumers and businesses. Although urban manufacturers typically comprise of small- and medium-sized enterprises employing on average 40 workers, collectively these enterprises provide a significant contribution to jobs, productivity, and innovation (APA, 2014).

Today, 21st century manufacturing can coexist within and adjacent to residential neighborhoods and commercial districts in the North Birmingham Community. Modern processes, buildings, and equipment can limit nuisances from sounds, odors, and mechanical vibrations. Urban design and land use regulations such as landscape elements, street configurations, facade treatments, and zoning provide solutions to buffer bland or unattractive industrial facilities and manage freight traffic (APA, 2014). Given its strategic location, site compatibility, and ready labor force, the North Birmingham Community has a tremendous opportunity to become the city's hub for 21st century manufacturing while enhancing economic and workforce development to a higher level.

#### Sources:

American Planning Association. (2014). *PAS Report 577: Sustainable Urban Industrial Development*. Chicago, IL.:

Leigh, N. G., Hoelzel, N. Z., Kraft, B. R., & Dempwolf, C. S.

Manufacturing Institute, Manufacturers Alliance for Productivity and Innovation, National Association of Manufacturers. (2012). *Facts about Manufacturing*. (9th ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org>.

### STRATEGY ID1: PUBLISH A COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF INDUSTRIAL LAND, BUILDINGS, AND BUSINESSES.

#### ACTION ID1-A: IDENTIFY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR POTENTIAL SITING IN VACANT LAND AND EXISTING INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES.

For the most part, 21st century manufacturing requires large and flat yards, structures with large building footprints, capacity for truck parking, and high-loading clearances. However, older industrial properties with small building footprints, small truck bays, and narrow access roads are not completely obsolete for 21st century industrial development. In summary, the site factors to consider are:

- Site grade and elevation
- Soil type and capacity for storm water drainage
- Size and capacity of water treatment plants and of water and sewer mains
- Quality of natural gas and electric power services
- Quality, type, and distance to telecommunication service
- Site and building design
- Conditions of current and surrounding properties

By matching these general guidelines with available vacant, undeveloped land and industrial properties in the community, local planners, community stakeholders, industrial businesses, and the development community can identify the best sites to locate and expand 21st century industrial development.

**Figure 3.2.1: Small-scale 3D printing studio shop**



Source: *blogTO, New 3D print studio, 2013*

**ACTION ID1-B: IDENTIFY, CATEGORIZE, AND ASSESS POTENTIAL BROWNFIELDS IN THE COMMUNITY.**

Vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties that are affected by environmental contamination are commonly referred to as brownfields. Rail yards, gas stations, dry cleaners, landfills, and factories associated with raw materials and chemicals that are no longer in operation are typical examples. Despite the high risk, liability, and uncertainty associated with their redevelopment, brownfields present many opportunities to urban communities. Their strategic location in proximity to centers of employment, cheaper land relative to other in-town locations, and existing infrastructure make them valuable.

The City of Birmingham, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Jefferson County, and other local community and economic development organizations should encourage redevelopment of brownfields in the North Birmingham Community by:

- Converting abandoned and vacant industrial properties into productive industrial, commercial, residential, recreational, or mixed uses
- Strengthening urban industrial districts
- Developing a comprehensive database of potential brownfields in the community
- Establishing partnerships with government agencies, business organizations, and stakeholders

A comprehensive database of potential brownfields in the community – categorized by type, size, and degree of environmental contamination – is critical in order to assess the benefits and impacts of redevelopment not only on a site-by-site basis, but on a community-wide level. This database would also help coordinate land use and economic development strategies while prioritizing redevelopment at individual brownfield sites. Lastly, partnerships between the City of Birmingham, Jefferson County, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), community stakeholders, and developers need to be established to coordinate funding sources and leverage technical assistance.

ADEM provides a 10-step guide to redevelop brownfields (as shown in Figure 3.2.2 on the following page), a list of brownfields throughout the state, and a Brownfields Cleanup State Revolving Loan program. The Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program also offers grants and revolving loans for technical assistance, assessment, planning, remediation, and environmental job training.

**Figure 3.2.2: Successful redevelopment of brownfield in Atlanta**



Source: ATLUrbansit, Atlantic Station before (above) & after (below), 2012

**Figure 3.2.3: ADEM’s “Ten-Step Process for Successful Brownfields Redevelopment”**

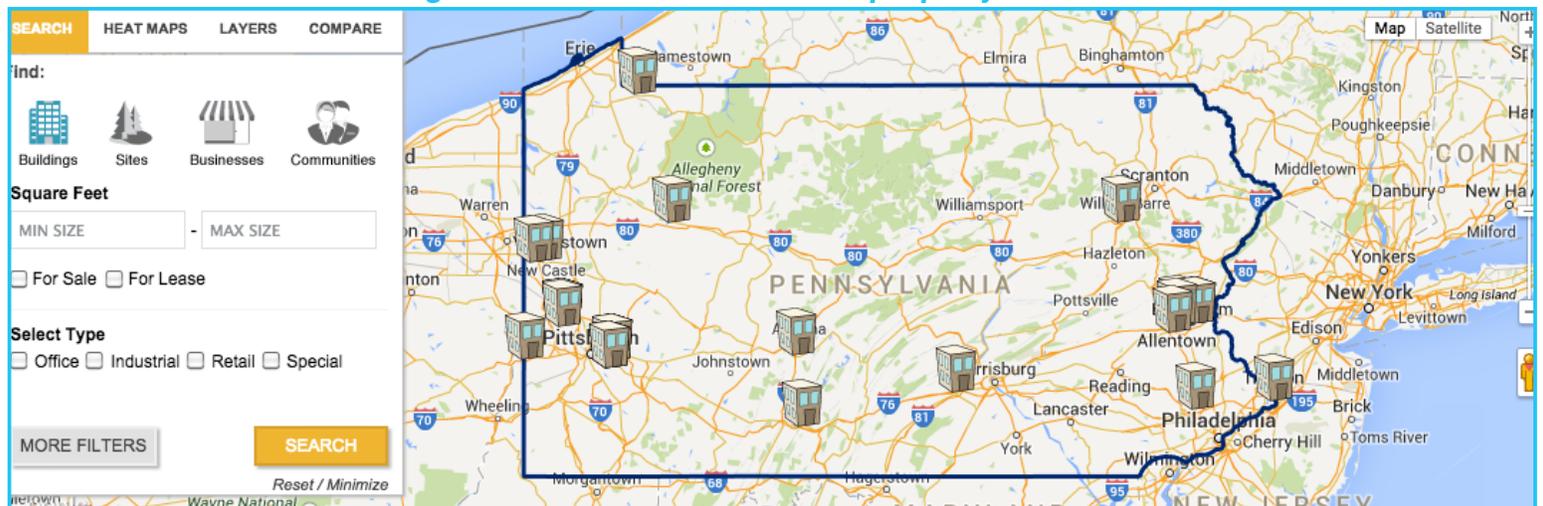
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Step 1 - Identify Property</b>              | <b>Step 6 - Liability / Cost Protection</b> |
| <b>Step 2 - Site Evaluation</b>                | <b>Step 7 - Exploring Marketability</b>     |
| <b>Step 3 - Remediation / Cleanup Planning</b> | <b>Step 8 - Redevelopment Begins</b>        |
| <b>Step 4 - Site Solution</b>                  | <b>Step 9 - Completion</b>                  |
| <b>Step 5 - Site Cleanup</b>                   | <b>Step 10 - Identify Next Property</b>     |

**ACTION ID1-C: DEVELOP A DATABASE OF INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES AND POTENTIAL BROWNFIELDS IN THE COMMUNITY.**

A comprehensive database of vacant, undeveloped land, existing industrial and blighted properties, and potential brownfields that is constantly updated and available to the public will have numerous uses and benefits to professionals in the industry, as well as residents and stakeholders in the North Birmingham community:

- Residents and community organizations will benefit from learning about potential brownfields and redevelopment opportunities in or near their neighborhoods and the impact they may have.
- Industrial brokers and real estate agents will have another source of reliable information to guide and inform their clients.
- Industrial land developers and manufacturers will have ready access to the possibilities of locating or expanding their business in the community.
- City officials and government agencies will be able to leverage this information to plan how to redevelop vacant and abandoned industrial properties.
- Together, these stakeholders can work to find the appropriate use for a property that serves the community as a potential quality of life enhancement (parks, open space, etc.) or a business that creates local jobs.

**Figure 3.2.3: Online brownfield property database**



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

**STRATEGY ID2: MAINTAIN URBAN INDUSTRIAL LAND AND IMPROVE THE CHARACTER AND IDENTITY OF INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES****ACTION ID2-A: UPDATE THE CITY'S ZONING ORDINANCE FOR INDUSTRIAL AND MIXED-USE DISTRICTS IN THE COMMUNITY TO ENSURE COMPATIBILITY AND GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL BUSINESSES.**

In order for industrial districts to operate in the long-term, it is essential to prevent encroachment of incompatible uses, allow for synergies between industrial businesses in the supply chain, and plan for industrial business expansion. Designating areas for mixed or industrial land uses in the Future Land Use Map, detailed in Chapter 5, will allow for industrial districts without creating conflicts in residential areas. This framework plan's Future Land Use map does not expand the size of industrial land uses beyond the areas designated in the 2013 comprehensive plan, but does designate mixed land use areas that will allow for some light industrial uses in the future. The city's Zoning Board of Adjustment or Planning Commission should only grant variances, issue rezonings, or steer from this idea if the incoming use is compatible with or adequately buffered from the existing industrial use. Such examples include commercial uses within the local industry's supply chain.

**Figure 3.2.4: Compatible industrial use in a neighborhood**



Source: a State of Teal, Avondale Brewery, 2014

### **ACTION ID2-B: INCORPORATE AND ENCOURAGE HIGHER QUALITY DESIGN STANDARDS AND CONDUCT MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS IN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS IN THE COMMUNITY.**

The manufacturing industries of the 21st century are increasingly relying on technological advancements and a highly skilled labor force to make their products and processes safer, environmentally responsible, and cost-effective. Additionally, nearby neighborhoods have begun demanding that industrial uses minimize their impact by reducing their visual, noise, and other negative impacts on residences. Industrial districts that are more capable of attracting and retaining 21st century industrial businesses while maintaining a positive local relationship have higher design standards and high-quality infrastructure, such as:

- signage, lighting, branding, and gateways
- trees and vegetation, terrain grading, retention and detention ponds, and bioswales
- creative building facades and materials in the architectural style or form of its neighborhood context
- U.S. Green Building Council's LEED green building principles
- well-maintained truck routes and convenient access to major highways and rail
- high-quality broadband services

Site improvements through better signage, lighting, branding, and gateways make industrial businesses easier to locate and identify as one district. In addition, landscape elements such as a variety of trees and vegetation, terrain grading, retention and detention ponds, and bioswales screen out industrial eyesores and mitigate stormwater runoff. Building facades and materials that blend in with local architecture enhance the industrial district's aesthetic appearance and strengthens its identity and character. In addition to site and building design enhancements, industrial businesses that also incorporate green building principles are less subject to community opposition, show their commitment to environmental sustainability, and offer an attractive place for employees and visitors.

Industrial businesses such as warehousing and distribution centers, logistics firms, and factories that require shipments of heavy or frequent loads are increasingly relying on trucks for freight movement. Consequently, street standards need to ensure truck routes are established and well-maintained but without harming residential neighborhoods. The high-tech industrial sector for pharmaceutical, biomedical, software, film and music, logistic, and automotive manufacturing and production rely on high-quality broadband services for operation. Lastly, since parts of the community are prone to flooding, stormwater management efforts need to be established in those areas. One method is to require individual sites to control and mitigate their impact on stormwater runoff through detention or retention ponds and low-impact development. However, a more effective method is to establish area-wide stormwater features that have a much greater impact at the watershed scale.

There are a number of methods to implement these design standards and prioritize high-quality infrastructure. Design standards can be created in industrial master plans for large sites and encouraged for smaller sites without master plans. Infrastructure maintenance and improvements can be prioritized and carried out through the city's capital improvement budget.

**STRATEGY ID3: PROMOTE INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING.****ACTION ID3-A: DEVELOP A LOCALLY-FOCUSED INDUSTRIAL INCUBATOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER.**

Business incubators are invaluable tools to strengthen economies and an industry's workforce. By providing technical support in a flexible facility for various processes and production methods, incubators assist startup firms from the early stages of business development all the way to graduation, when a company has become established. Incubators vary by industry, but in general they provide various services and benefits, including:

- flexible and affordable leases
- conference rooms, laboratories, and shared spaces
- assistance in finding affordable expansion and investment capital
- enhancement of a community's entrepreneurial climate
- accelerated growth in a targeted industry sector

While the City of Birmingham already has one business incubator -- the Innovation Depot -- an industrial incubator located within the North Birmingham Community would go a long way in advancing 21st century manufacturing and workforce development. The North Birmingham Industrial Incubator could tailor to both existing industrial sectors in the local community and to future businesses. The community's existing businesses would benefit from the ideas developed from the incubator's companies and could partner with the incubator to train potential employees for specific skills. Additionally, by supporting 21st century manufacturing companies that specialize in sectors such as robotics, 3D printing, software, and logistics, the community's incubator would develop a more diversified economy, produce goods to service the local community, and help train a more productive and skilled workforce.

A great source of research, development, and innovation that should be pursued to advance 21st century manufacturing in the North Birmingham Community is the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation. Initiated by the current White House administration, the objective is to establish regional hubs – Institutes for Manufacturing Innovation (IMIs) – from public-private partnerships of universities, government agencies, and industries to develop new industrial technologies, processes, and products. Out of a planned initial network of 15 IMIs, four hubs have been established in the Midwest and Eastern regions of the country focusing on power electronics, digital manufacturing, 3D printing, and lightweight and modern metals. By leveraging the Birmingham region's major research and technical universities and colleges, a strong healthcare sector, and well-established industrial companies, the North Birmingham Community has the opportunity to bring in a IMI to become a regional center of research and innovation for 21st century manufacturing. Additionally, these larger employers in the area could work with the incubator and workforce development service to address their employment needs.

Action CR2-A and Map 2.2.5 from Chapter 2 recommend sites for a North Birmingham industrial incubator or a research center at the North Birmingham Elementary School and at the former U.S. Pipe & Foundry site.

### 3.3 Commercial Development (CD) Strategies and Actions

In addition to traditional industries and historic neighborhoods, the North Birmingham Community has a commercial core. The North Birmingham Business District began developing during the early decades of the 20th century as a trading center for northeast Jefferson County. Today, the district has some neighborhood amenities and shops but lacks the concentration of businesses needed to support a thriving, vibrant, and active community.

Aside from the North Birmingham Business District, the community's commercial areas are characterized by abandoned properties, vacant lots, fast food outlets, and convenience stores scattered on major roads and in neighborhood pockets. As mentioned in the previous Community Renewal section, the community is underserved in the quantity and quality of neighborhood amenities, such as daycare centers, retail shops, restaurants, and grocery stores. Furthermore, the substandard level of transit service and private vehicle transportation hinders access to healthier food outlets.

The challenge for the North Birmingham community is to leverage its commercial core and the ongoing expansion of its major roads to revitalize its business district and neighborhood retail pockets. By implementing the Community Renewal strategies and actions in the previous chapter, the community as a whole will become more attractive for investment and development. In addition, implementing the industrial development strategies and actions described in Section 3.2 will contribute to commercial development in the community in two ways. On one hand, establishing a hub for 21st century industries will spinoff new retail, repair shops, and offices tied along the supply chain to industrial businesses. On the other hand, providing stable careers in 21st century manufacturing will increase the workforce's median household income to a healthy level needed to sustain existing and new neighborhood businesses and amenities. This section includes strategies and actions that directly target commercial development in North Birmingham.

The goals below relate to the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan and will be achieved by implementing these strategies and actions. A series of action items are presented and described on the following pages. The implementation chapter identifies potential partnerships for each action item along with a potential timeline.

#### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CR) GOALS

- 1) TRANSFORM THE NORTH BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS DISTRICT INTO MIXED-USE, TRANSIT HUB FOR LIVING, WORKING, AND SHOPPING.**
- 2) EXPAND NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPS AND AMENITIES THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.**
- 3) ENHANCE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, HEALTHIER FOOD OUTLETS IN THE COMMUNITY.**

## STRATEGY CD1: PUBLISH A COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF COMMERCIAL LAND, BUILDINGS, AND BUSINESSES.

**ACTION CD1-A: CONDUCT A MORE DETAILED REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY TO ATTRACT THE RECOMMENDED BUSINESS TYPES IN SPECIFIED LOCATIONS.**

A preliminary market study has been conducted and is presented in the appended Existing Conditions Document. The study analyzes the supply and demand of the local market to determine the spending potential and retail sales of existing business groups. In addition to this study, a more detailed and focused real estate market analysis is needed to determine the market rate and appraised values for commercial properties under lease or sale, the vacancy rate, the absorption rate, and the overall stock of commercial land and spaces. From this analysis, informed decisions can be made to identify the market rents and sale prices needed to support investment in commercial development, business attraction, and expansion. The recommended business types mentioned below derive from the Existing Conditions study and from public feedback received.

Map 3.3.1 shows recommended locations for specific business types:

### **A. Mixed-use development near transit access:**

- Assisted living units for senior citizens and/or a senior center
- Affordable and mixed-income residential units
- Retail space or office space for small businesses

### **B. Retail and service:**

- Small sporting goods, furniture stores, electronic goods stores
- Florists, hobby and gift shops, tailors
- Specialty food stores and restaurants

### **C. Grocery and/or general merchandise**

### **D. Industrial and mixed-use development:**

- Warehousing, distribution, and logistics
- 21st century industrial manufacturers
- Mixed-use development with affordable and mixed-income residential units, live-work units, retail space or office space for small businesses, and recreational amenities

### **E. Highway commercial:**

- Outlet malls, shopping centers, and big-box stores that would reduce the community's retail gaps

### **F. and f. Food & Entertainment District:**

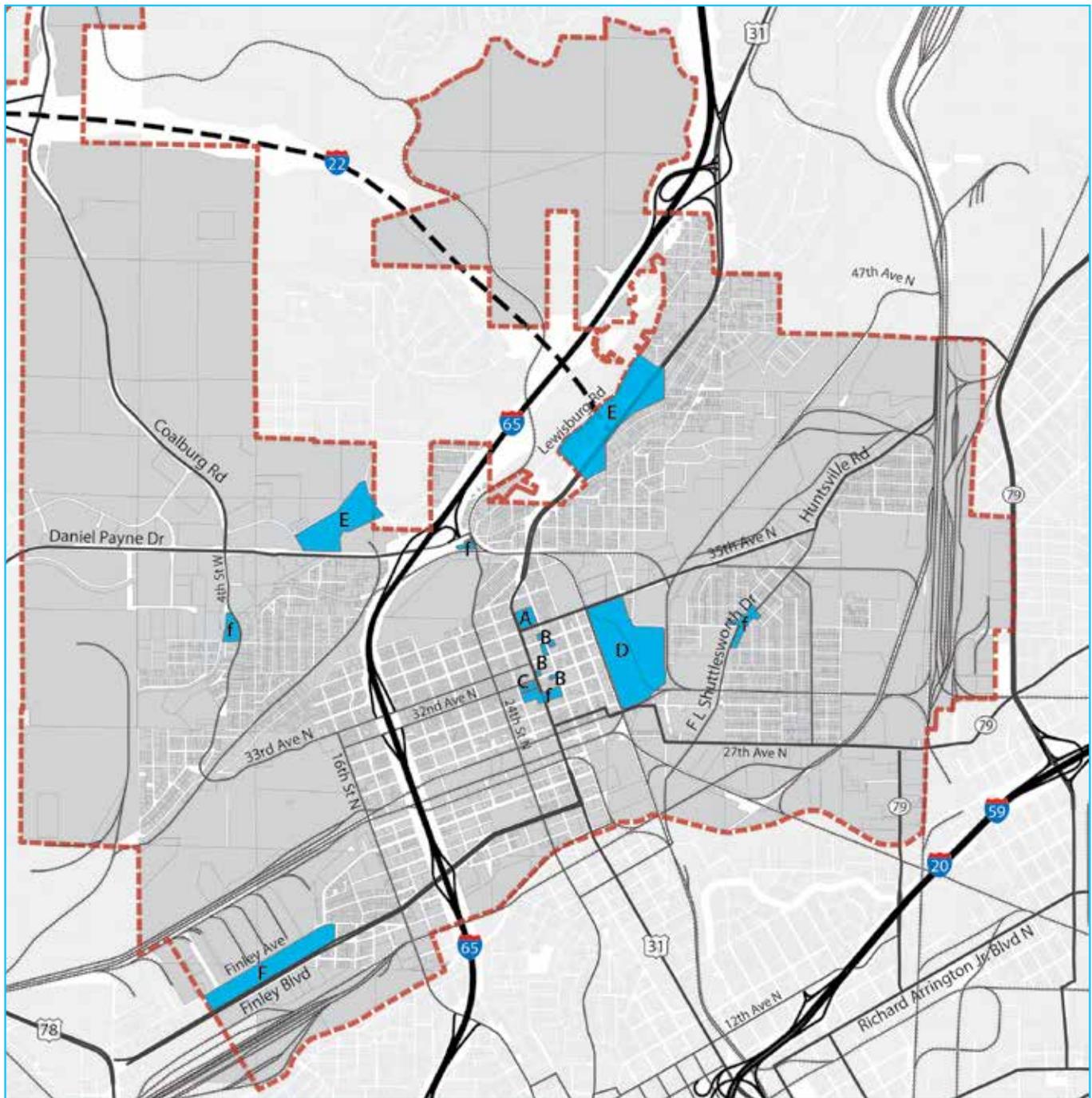
- **F.** Primary Food & Entertainment District with food outlets, small specialty grocery stores, food trucks, mobile grocery trucks, entertainment activities and businesses within a mixed-use district
- **f.** Satellite services areas with farmer's market, food outlets, small specialty grocery stores, food trucks, and mobile grocery trucks to improve the access to quality food

**ACTION CD1-B: IDENTIFY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR POTENTIAL SITING IN VACANT, UNDEVELOPED LAND AND EXISTING COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES.**

Commercial development encompasses a wide range of building types, sizes, and site requirements. Knowing and addressing these requirements will help attract and retain businesses. In summary, site and building factors to consider are:

- Ceiling heights of at least 9 feet for office and 14 feet for retail
- 90 feet of depth and 25 feet in width for most retail shops
- Building footprints between 50,000-200,000 square feet for big-box stores
- Sidewalk access and ground level space for retail
- Quality of electric power and telecommunication services
- Building design and conditions of surroundings

Map 3.3.1: Initial Market Study Sites for Commercial Development



Recommended Sites for Commercial Development

- Sites for Commercial Development
- A. Mixed-use development
- B. Retail and service
- C. Specialty grocery or general merchandise
- D. Industrial and mixed-use development
- E. Highway commercial
- F and f. Food & Entertainment District
- - - Community boundary



## STRATEGY CD2: PROMOTE AND ENHANCE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY'S BUSINESS DISTRICT, CORRIDORS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD POCKETS.

### ACTION CD2-A: UPDATE THE CITY'S FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND ZONING ORDINANCE TO ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN COMPATIBLE LOCATIONS.

Fortunately, the North Birmingham Business District already has the urban design elements needed to attract businesses, customers, and visitors. Some of the district's attractive design features are its historic character, district signage, pedestrian scale, light posts, wide sidewalks, continuous building frontages, and plenty of on-street and off-street surface parking.

Where the district falls short of success is in its mix and concentration of commercial uses and complementary uses. Mixed land uses and complementary uses, thus, are designated in the Future Land Use Map in Chapter 5. By mixing residential and office uses vertically within a building and horizontally across adjacent parcels, a greater concentration of customers, employees, and businesses can be attracted to support more commercial businesses. An improved transit plan, detailed in the following chapter, will help the area become a transit hub better connected to the rest of the city and to nearby neighborhoods.

### ACTION CD2-B: ESTABLISH A FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT IN THE ACIPCO-FINLEY NEIGHBORHOOD.

The North Birmingham community is known for landmark restaurants and one of the largest farmer's markets in the state. All situated within the Acipco-Finley neighborhood, institutions such as Niki's West restaurant, Eagle's restaurant, and the Alabama Farmer's Market attract customers and visitors. Unfortunately, the community as a whole is underserved by restaurants, grocery stores, and healthy food access. Hence, there is a great opportunity to leverage these community assets to strengthen the area into a destination with uses such as:

- **Food outlets:** sit-down and specialty restaurants (Figure 3.3.1)
- **Food distribution and warehousing:** suppliers connecting farmers, the farmer's market, local restaurants, customers, and visitors
- **Entrepreneurs:** spin-off businesses that start out at the farmer's market such as mini grocery stores, food trucks, and mobile grocery trucks
- **Entertainment activities and businesses:** affordable, rentable kitchen facilities within or near the farmer's market for healthy cooking demonstrations and for food and music festivals

### ACTION CD2-C: PROVIDE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES TO BEAUTIFY, RENOVATE, REHABILITATE, AND REDEVELOP PROPERTIES FOR COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USES.

Transforming a blighted commercial area into a more attractive place through aesthetic improvements can boost the confidence of investors and businesses to open a new business in the community and can also encourage customers and visitors to return. Such projects include:

#### Art projects and signage:

- Murals on blank facades, neighborhood signs and banners, and decorative lighting

#### Landscape projects:

- Trees, benches, and hedges to define a space; plants and flowers to decorate retail displays and outdoor dining areas; and bioswales and rain gardens for stormwater management

#### Pop-up projects (figure 3.3.2):

- Temporarily convert vacant storefronts into space for emerging businesses and entrepreneurs to convey a vibrant, active commercial area
- Temporarily close a street for a block party, festivals, and other activities
- Transform unused on-street parking spaces into platforms for dining areas, vegetation, or displays
- Organize community volunteers to clean up sidewalks and trim landscape elements, apply a fresh coat of paint to building facades, and make minor repairs to signs and entrances

**Figure 3.3.1: Uptown, A Food & Entertainment District**



*Source: Weld for Birmingham, 2014*

**Figure 3.3.2: Pop-Up Shops & Festival in Woodlawn**



*Source: Kelsey Stein of AL.com, 2013*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Transportation & Infrastructure

### 4.1 Roadway and Intersection Improvements

#### § Corridor X / I-22 Extension

- v Realign 47th Avenue with Corridor X / I-22 Terminus @ U.S. 31
- v Straighten and Widen Roadway
- v Add Shoulders
- v Add Median
- v Widen Rail Underpass @ Cedar Court

#### § Finley Boulevard Extension

- v Extend Finley Blvd. from U.S. 31 to F.L. Shuttlesworth Drive
- v Maxine Parker Memorial Bridge

#### § Build New Street Between U.S. 31 and 27th Street

- v Formalize existing intersections
- v Modify existing parking lot access points
- v Add curbs and sidewalk

#### § U.S. 31 Traffic Calming and Access Management

- v Add pavement edge striping
- v Reduce lane width
- v Add planted median
- v Eliminate/minimize driveway access to U.S. 31
- v Add planters to help screen pedestrians

#### § 41st Street / Daniel Payne Drive

- v Rebuild as a Suburban Industrial Access Road (Sidewalks)
- v Resurface / Repave

#### § Various Intersection Improvements

- v Intersection Realignment: 35th Avenue @ Shuttlesworth Drive
- v Intersection Reconfiguration: Add Roundabout – Shuttlesworth Drive @ 33rd Terrace

#### § Green Streets

- v Various Streets in Collegeville

#### § Truck Routes

- v Establish and enforce truck routes that do not conflict with residential neighborhoods

## Transportation & Infrastructure

### 4.2 Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Improvements

#### § Bike Lane

- v 33rd Avenue between 19th Street North and 27th Street
- v 24th Street between 26th Avenue and 39th Avenue
- v 26th Avenue / 11th Place North between Finley Avenue W and 24th Street
- v Finley Avenue West between Alabama Farmer's Market and 11th Place North

#### § Shared Use Lane (Sharrow)

- v 22nd Street between 33rd Avenue and 36th Avenue North
- v 27th Street between 33rd Avenue into Norwood (Shared Bus/Bike)

#### § Super Stop

- v Create a transit hub in the North Birmingham Central Business District

### 4.3 Roadway Maintenance

#### § Hooper City

- v Roadway Repaving
- v Roadway Edge Build-up
- v Vegetation Maintenance (Cut Grass/Bushes)
- v Clean Swales/Drainage

#### § North Birmingham

- v Roadway Repaving
- v Sidewalk Maintenance
- v ADA Compliance (curb ramps)

#### § Collegeville

- v Roadway Repaving
- v Sidewalk Maintenance
- v ADA Compliance (curb ramps/bus stops)

### 4.4 Reduce Roadway Infrastructure Burden

#### § Collegeville: Abandon Roadways

- v 27th Court North between 31st Street North and 32nd Street North
- v 28th Avenue between 31st Street North and 32nd Street North

#### § Fairmont: Abandon Roadways

- v 30th Place North between 42nd Terrace and Cheek Road (make private road – 1 house)
- v 30th Street/Ray Road between 47th Avenue North and 45th Avenue North (make private road – 1 house)
- v 45th Avenue North between U.S. 31 and Cheek Road (make private road – 1 house)
- v Fairmont Way between 43rd Avenue North and Dead End (no houses)

DRAFT

# Future Land Use

CHAPTER 5

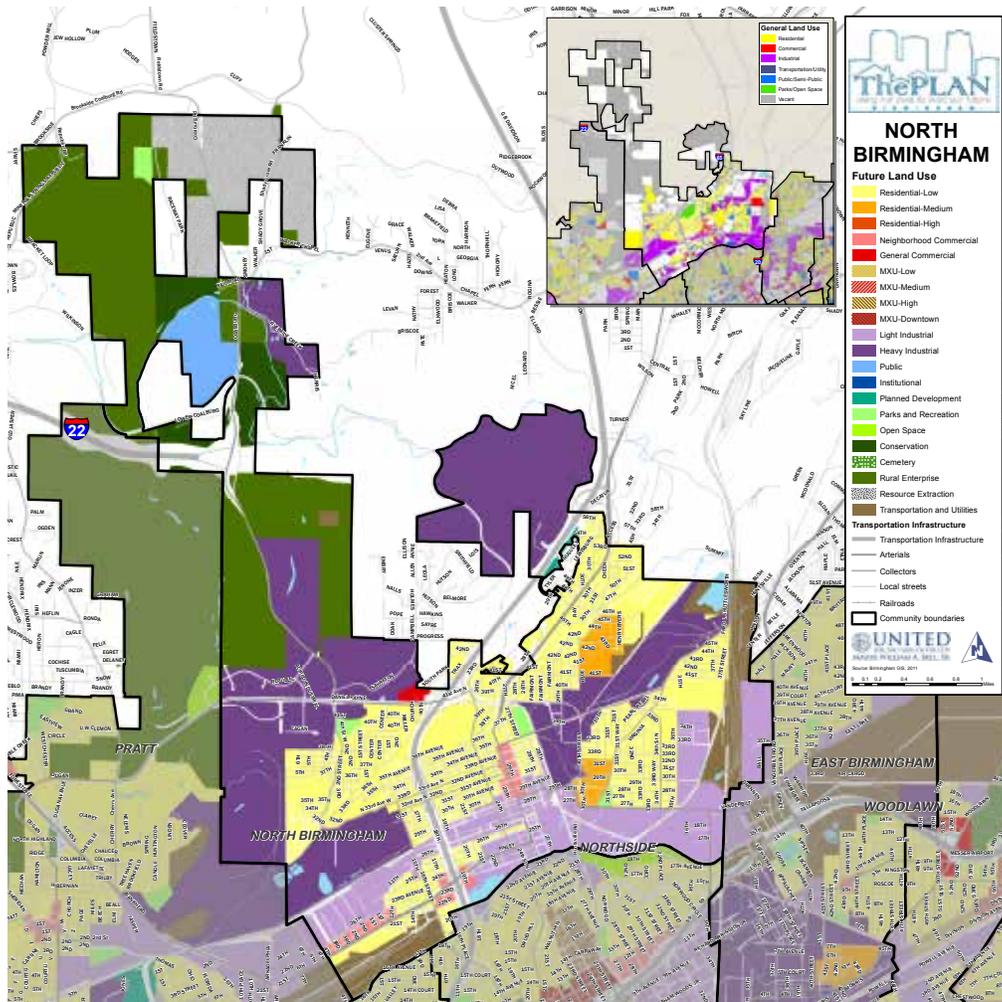
## 5.1 Future Land Use Map Changes

Adopted in 2013, the City of Birmingham’s Comprehensive Plan sets forth a future land use map (Map 6.1 below) for the entire city, including the North Birmingham community. This framework plan proposes an amended future land use map (Map. 6.2 on the following page) based off land use and building surveys reported in the Existing Conditions document.

The most significant change between the two maps is the introduction of Mixed-Use Low and Mixed-Use Medium into North Birmingham. This plan assigns the entire North Birmingham commercial district as Mixed-Use Medium and portions of the Acipco-Finely neighborhood surrounding the proposed food & entertainment district as Mixed-Use Low. This land use will provide more flexibility to attract future development and more complementary uses to sustain future development. There are also four small pockets of Mixed-Use Low proposed in Hooper City, Collegeville, and Fairmont -- all based on strengthening existing neighborhood commercial development.

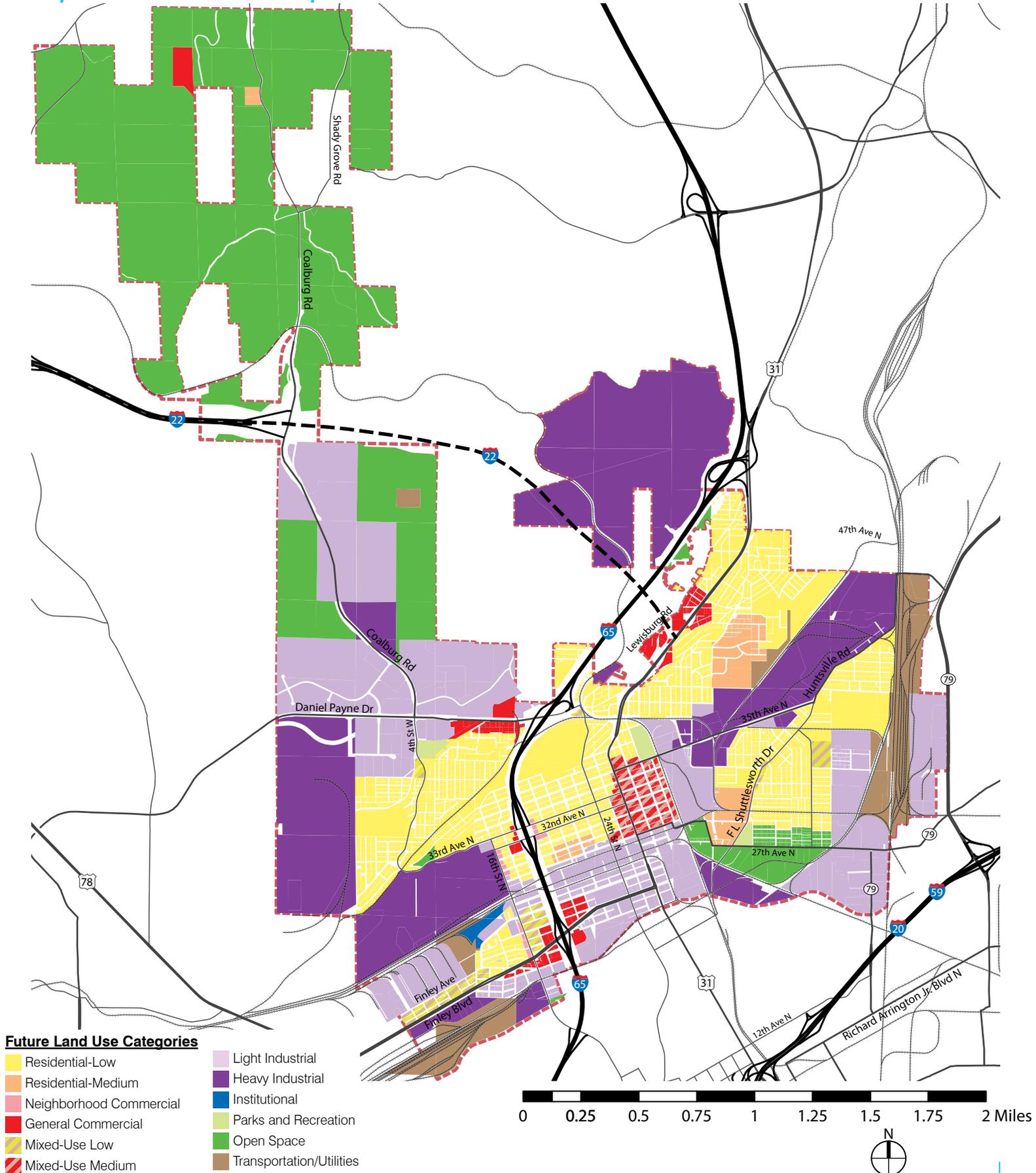
The proposed future land use map also expands general commercial along major roads and expands open space around flood-prone properties. The enlarged general commercial areas reside along Daniel Payne Drive in Hooper City and along Highway 31 near the proposed I-22 extension exit. With this designation, future land uses will suited to these high-volume thoroughfares. Lastly, the expansion of open space in the southern portion of the Collegeville neighborhood is a result of property buybacks in the floodplain and the approved Finely Boulevard extension to I-20/59. Open space in this area will minimize conflicts and create opportunities for improved buffers and stormwater management.

Map 5.1 Future Land Use Map (2013)



Source: City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, 2013

### Map 5.2 Future Land Use Map



# Implementation

## 6.1 Implementation

Following its adoption, the implementation phase of this plan will begin. The City of Birmingham’s Department of Planning, Engineering, and Permits will designate a staff member to be responsible for facilitating the plan’s implementation. He or she will help coordinate the implementation of the action items and will engage stakeholders throughout the process.

The Implementation Table below lists the recommended action items, the relevant page number, an approximate timeline for the action’s completion, and potential partnerships that could help implement the actions.

### 6.2 Implementation Table

Action Item	P. #	Timeline	Potential Partnerships
Blighted and tax-delinquent property database	16	Short-term	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, and Permits; Dept. of Information Management Services; Dept. of Community Development
Modernize code enforcement	17	In progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, and Permits inspectors; Dept. of Community Development inspectors
Repair, renovate, and convert blighted, contaminated, and flood-prone properties	18, 22, 42	Medium-term	Birmingham Land Bank Authority; neighborhood associations; City of Birmingham loan programs; Habitat for Humanity; U.S. Corps of Engineers; Clinton Global Initiative
Brownfield and floodplain property database	22, 34, 35, 36	Medium-term	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM); Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Village Creek Watershed Society; Dept. of Planning, Engineering, and Permits; Jefferson County Health Action Partnership
Analyze industrial & commercial development potential	33, 42	Short-term	Department of Economic Development; Northern Birmingham Community Coalition; REV Birmingham; Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham; Non-profit consulting firm
Update zoning with mixed-use areas	36, 42, 47, 48	In progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, and Permits
Encourage design standards for industrial uses	37	In progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, and Permits; U.S. Green Building Council of Alabama
Redevelop former North Birmingham Elementary School	25	Long-Term	Birmingham Board of Education; Birmingham Land Bank Authority; Higher education institutions
Redevelop former Riggins Elementary School	25	Long-term	Higher education institutions; Dept. of Economic Development Birmingham Board of Education; Alethia House
Redevelop former Carver High School	25	Long-term	Higher education institutions; Dept. of Economic Development; Birmingham Board of Education; Local Initiatives Support Coalition
Redevelop the closed Northern Health Center	25	Long-term	Local hospitals; UAB medical school; Jefferson County Board of Health

Industrial incubator on former U.S. Pipe & Foundry site	26, 38	Long-term	Department of Economic Development; Alabama Department of Commerce; Birmingham Business Alliance Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham Higher education institutions; Community Development Block Grant funds for incubators National Network for Manufacturing Innovation; Alabama Industrial Development Training division; Alabama Technology Network
Establish a food & entertainment district	42	Long-term	Alabama Farmer’s Market; Alabama’s Farmer’s Market Authority; REV Birmingham
Use art projects, landscaping, and pop-up shops to energize commercial districts	42	Short-Term	REV Birmingham; Magic City Mural Collective; Property Owners
Improve the access for quality food in neighborhood stores by building off the food & entertainment district	40	Medium-Term	REV Birmingham; Alabama Farmer’s Market; Neighborhood grocery and corner stores
Redevelop Maclin Park and nearby lots	26, 57	In Progress	Birmingham Land Bank Authority; Housing Authority of the Birmingham District; YMCA of Greater Birmingham; Dept. of Parks & Recreation
Establish less intrusive truck routes	44, 45	Short-Term	Alabama Department of Transportation; Dept. of Traffic Engineering
Improve transit routes	44, 45	Medium-term	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority
Construct bike routes and create bike system	44, 45	Long-term	Dept. of Traffic Engineering
Improve intersections	44, 45	Short-term	Dept. of Traffic Engineering
Create a transit super stop	44, 45	Short-term	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority; Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham